



THE POEMS OF  
ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON  
AND HIS FRIENDS IN  
ENGLAND AND AUSTRALIA

By EDITH HUMPHRIS and  
DOUGLAS SLADFEN

With 16 Sketches by Gordon  
and numerous other  
Illustrations

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*One Volume, 12s 6d net*

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CONSTABLE AND CO. LTD.



ADAM LINDSAY GORDON AT THE AGE OF 30

*From a daguerreotype sent by him, at the time of his marriage, to his uncle, Miss Gordon's father Given by permission of Frances Gordon*



THE POEMS  
OF  
ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

INCLUDING SEVERAL  
NEVER BEFORE PRINTED

*Arranged by*  
DOUGLAS SLADEN

*With Three Sketches of Gordon  
drawn by himself, and  
other Illustrations*



LONDON  
CONSTABLE AND CO. LTD.  
1913

TO ALL CHELTONIANS  
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE  
THIS EDITION OF THE WORKS OF  
THE OLD CHELTONIAN POET  
ADAM LINDSAY GORDON  
IS DEDICATED, BY  
DOUGLAS SLADEN, O.C.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	XIII
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH . . . . .	XIV
GORDON AS A POET . . . . .	XXIV

## POEMS—

### Part I

#### *Bush and Horse Poems*

THE SICK STOCKRIDER ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	1
FROM THE WRECK ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	4
WOLF AND HOUND ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	9
GONE ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . . .	12
HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	14
YE WEARIE WAYFARER. Hys Ballad in Eight Fyttes ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> )—	
Fytte I BY WOOD AND WOLD . . . . .	18
Fytte II. BY FLOOD AND FIELD . . . . .	19
Fytte III. ZU DER EDLEN JAGD . . . . .	21
Fytte IV. IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS . . . . .	23
Fytte V. LEX TALIONIS . . . . .	27
Fytte VI. POTTERS' CLAY . . . . .	29
Fytte VII. CITO PEDE PRETERIT ÆTAS . . . . .	30
Fytte VIII. FINIS EXOPTATUS . . . . .	34

#### HIPPODROMANIA. In Five Parts (*Sea-Spray*)—

Part I. VISIONS IN THE SMOKE . . . . .	39
Part II. THE FIELDS OF COLERAINE . . . . .	44
Part III. CREDAT JUDÆUS APELLA . . . . .	46
Part IV. BANKER'S DREAM . . . . .	48
Part V. EX FUMO DARE LUCEM. . . . .	53
THE ROLL OF THE KETTLEDROM ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . . .	60

	PAGE
THE ROMANCE OF BRITOMARTE ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) .	67
THE LAST LEAP ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . . .	76
A HUNTING SONG ( <i>Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News</i> ) . . . . .	78
A DEDICATION—to the Author of 'Holmby House' ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	79

## Part II

*Poems Swinburnian in Form and Pessimism,  
but full of the Personality of Gordon*

DOUBTFUL DREAMS ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	82
DE TE ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	86
THE RHYME OF JOYOUS GARDE ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	89
THE SONG OF THE SURF ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . . .	97
THE SWIMMER ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	99
PODAS OKUS ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . . .	102
LAUDAMUS ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	107
NO NAME ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	108
WORMWOOD AND NIGHTSHADE ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . . .	110
QUARE FATIGASTI ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . . .	114
A BASKET OF FLOWERS ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	116
BELLONA ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . . .	119
DELILAH—From a picture ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . . .	121

## Part III

*Gordon's Little Masterpieces*

FROM LIGHTNING AND TEMPEST ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . . .	124
A SONG OF AUTUMN ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . . .	125

## Part IV

*Autobiographical Poems*

TO MY SISTER ( <i>Found among Gordon's papers after death</i> ) . . . . .	126
AN EXILE'S FAREWELL ( <i>Temple Bar</i> ) . . . . .	129

# CONTENTS

ix

PAGE

EARLY ADIEUX ( <i>An Article by Fred Marshall</i> )	131
A VOICE FROM THE BUSH. Erroneously attributed to Gordon, really by the late Mowbray Morris. ( <i>Sladen's 'Australian Ballads'</i> )	133
WHISPERINGS IN WATTLE-BOUGHS ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> )	138

## Part II

### Ballads

FAUCONSHAWE ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . .	140
RIPPLING WATER ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . .	146
UNSHRIVEN ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . .	148
THE THREE FRIENDS ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . .	150

## Part III

### Miscellaneous

CUI BONO ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . .	154
CONFITEOR ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . .	155
SUNLIGHT ON THE SEA. The Philosophy of a Feast. ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . .	158
ARS LONGA. A Song of Pilgrimage. ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> )	161
BORROWED PLUMES. A Preface and a Piracy. ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . .	163
PASTOR CUM. Translation from Horace. ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . .	164
A LEGEND OF MADRID. Translated from the Spanish. ( <i>Sea-Spray</i> ) . . . .	165
A FRAGMENT ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . . . .	170
'THE OLD LEAVEN' ( <i>The Australasian</i> ) . .	171
THE ROAD TO AVERNUS ( <i>Bush Ballads</i> ) . .	177

## Part IIII

ASHTAROTH: A Dramatic Lyric (Including 'Thora's Song,' page 198) . . . .	188
--------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

## Part VIII

PAGE

*Poems not included in the Collected Poems  
edited by Marcus Clarke*

THE DEATH OF NELSON . . .	287
ARGEMONE . . .	289
THE FEUD: A BALLAD . . .	293
TWO UNPUBLISHED POEMS—	
(i) Jones plays the deuce with his grammar	304
(ii) Whenever you meet with a man from home	305
THE PATROL AND THE GOLD-DIGGER, . . .	306
AN UNFINISHED POEM—	
All night I've heard the marsh-frog's croak	308
FRAGMENTS—	
TO CHARLEY WALKER . . .	311
TO THE SAME . . .	311
TO THE SAME . . .	312
TO A. PATCHETT MARTIN . . .	312
A HUNTING RHYME . . .	313
A TRANSLATION . . .	313
GORDON'S VALEDICTORY POEM . . .	313
To MY SOUL (Gordon's last poem) . . .	315

*Bush Songs attributed to Gordon*

THE STOCKMAN'S LAST BED . . .	316
THE BUSHMAN'S LULLABY . . .	317
CARELESS JIM . . .	319

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON AT THE AGE OF 30 . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
<i>From a daguerriotype sent by him at the time of his marriage to his uncle, Miss Gordon's father. Lent for reproduction by Miss Frances Gordon.</i>	

GEORGE STEVENS ON 'THE COLONEL,' winner of the Grand National in 1869 and 1870, but called 'The Unlucky Horse' . . . . .	PAGE 14
<i>Reproduced by permission, from the oil-painting in the possession of his son, George Stevens, Esq.</i>	

ADAM DURNFORD GORDON, the Cheltenham Colonel Newcome, father of the poet, and for eleven years Hindustani Master at Cheltenham College . . . . .	21
<i>From a miniature lent by Miss Gordon</i>	

GORDON ON 'CADGER,' winner of the Metropolitan Steeplechase at Melbourne . . . . .	50
<i>Reproduced by permission of Miss Frances Gordon. Drawn by Gordon himself in a letter to her father.</i>	

TOM OLIVER ON 'BIRMINGHAM' . . . . .	78
<i>Reproduced by permission of Mrs. Shepherd, of the Stork Hotel, Birmingham. From the oil-painting which hangs there.</i>	

GORDON ON HORSEBACK . . . . .	117
<i>Sketched by himself in a letter to Charley Walker. Reproduced by permission of Miss H. Walker</i>	

	PAGE
THE 'JANE' OF GORDON'S ROMANCE . . .	127

*Reproduced by her permission.*

GORDON ON 'LALLAH ROOKH,' in the Steeple- chase at Cheltenham, 1855 . . .	134
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*Drawn by himself in a letter to Charley Walker. Repro-  
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## INTRODUCTION

IN this edition of the Poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon I have followed the text of his *Sea-Spray and Smoke-Drift* (1867), *Ashtaroith* (1867), and *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes* (1870). I have taken no liberties with the published text, though certain of the originals have been in my hands. I have contented myself with rearranging the poems in groups according to their subject or character, so that those who are interested in Gordon as a horse-poet may find his horse-poems together, and those who are interested in his best and most serious work may find the poems which they look for together. I have given 'The Sick Stockrider' the pride of place, with 'How We Beat the Favourite' almost immediately below it, because it is on these two poems that Gordon's fame, justly or unjustly, chiefly rests. They are closely followed by the thirteen parts of 'Ye Wearie Wayfarer' and 'Hippodromania,' in which occur many of those lines which have become proverbs in Australia, such as :

'No game was ever yet worth a rap  
For a rational man to play,  
Into which no accident, no mishap,  
Could possibly find its way.'

In the volume I have been able to include several pieces never before printed. I have also added a

section which contains poems not previously presented in a collected form, while the book ends with three 'Bush Poems' much sung in the bush, and generally ascribed to Gordon, but which, in my opinion, are not his work.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A brief account of Gordon's short life will conduce to the better understanding of his poems.

He was the direct descendant of the original Adam of Gordon, who was rewarded with the Gordon country in Aberdeenshire for deserting from Edward I. to the Bruce; of the Gordon who was killed in the great battle of Pinkie; of the Marquess of Huntly, who laid down his head as finely as Montrose for his king; of the Gordon who was out in the Forty-five; of the Peterborough of the Spanish Succession; of a Duke of Gordon and an Earl of Aberdeen. And his mother was brought up by the brother of the Lady Anne Lindsay who wrote 'Auld Robin Gray.' His father, Captain Adam Durnford Gordon, was a dashing Indian officer who settled successively in the Azores, the Madeiras, and at Cheltenham. Adam Lindsay was born in the Azores on October 19, 1833. He was sent to Cheltenham College at the immature age of seven, on the day that it opened its doors, and there he was received by the future Lord James of Hereford, who showed signs of a remarkable future by arriving at the school a day before the time.

After he had been at school a year, Lindsay disappears from the College register and the ken of every biographer for six years, when he appears as a

cadet of the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, where he was the contemporary and intimate friend of Gordon of Khartûm and 'Gunner Jingo.' Perhaps he was abroad part of the time, for he told Tenison Woods that he had been in France, and he was fond of reciting French poetry. He was at Woolwich three years, and left it, whether by request or by his own free will, without obtaining a commission. Even there he was famous for his escapades. There is a general consensus that he was a dashing and high-spirited boy. That dash, those high spirits, were destined to get him into trouble. For about the time that he went to Woolwich, he took to spending his holidays in Jem Edwards the prize-fighter's boxing saloon at the Roebuck Inn, Cheltenham, and in Tom Oliver's training stables out at Prestbury, where he met some of the most famous sporting personages of the day. This bore an unexpected fruit when, at the conclusion of his Woolwich career, he was sent to the Royal Grammar School at Worcester. For there he distinguished himself by stealing a mare from her stable to ride her in the steeplechase. This mare was the often-quoted Lallah Rookh, and the attendant scandal is believed to have been one of the causes which sent Gordon out to Australia. He was at the Worcester Grammar School for a year or more, and then went back to Cheltenham College for a year. How a boy with a past, eighteen years old, came to be readmitted there has not been explained.

A year later, after (as we learn from her own letters) offering to forfeit his passage if the beautiful Jane Bridges would marry him, he sailed for Australia and began the serious part of his life. Hitherto, as his

letters to Charley Walker show,<sup>1</sup> he had varied the monotony of a strict Low Church home with skylarking and debts. If his father, the Cheltenham Colonel Newcome, was disposed to be lenient, his mother, very proud of their lineage, was not, so it gradually became imperative that he should go. In Cheltenham he might have been a mere hanger-on of sport. In Australia, where he landed in November 1853, his character developed from the first. Enlisting at once in the South Australian Police as a constable (though his father had obtained a commission for him), he found himself in a disciplined but exciting life, and for the first time regularly occupied with horses, though he had owned a horse and won a couple of steeplechases in England.

We find him breaking in and training, owning and riding a steeplechaser before he had been in Australia a year, and, two years after his landing, resigning from the police to be a wandering horse-breaker, an avocation which he followed with the utmost zest for seven years.

It was in these years, riding from station to station, that he acquired the knowledge of the bush and bushmen displayed in his poems, and the intuition into the characters of horses which gave him such a wonderful command over his mount in a race. When his work was done he saw little of the stockmen and their master. Unless he was invited to stay in the squatter's house, he pitched his tent a mile away, and

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<sup>1</sup> Charley Walker, son of the famous gentleman-rider of the same name, was a Worcester friend of Gordon's own age, who married a sister of Jane Bridges. Fourteen most characteristic letters written by Gordon to him, some in England, some in Australia, are given in *Adam Lindsay Gordon and his Friends in England and Australia*.

spent his evenings in reading and, as time went on, in writing by the feeble light of a sludge lamp. Tenison Woods, the Roman Catholic priest of a district of 22,000 square miles, who met him by chance at Lake Hawdon station, whose owner, Mr. Stockdale, made a friend of him, had a long talk with him about books, and placed his library at his disposal. The book Gordon loved best was a Horace to carry about in his lonely rides.

In 1862 he married Maggie Park, who had nursed him after a bad fall at the Caledonian Hotel at Robe, S.A. In 1864 he received a legacy of £7000 (after two years' search by the trustees to discover his whereabouts). He bought a few small properties, and was persuaded to stand for Parliament. An attempt was being made by the Blyth Government to break up the squatters' properties, and a candidate was needed who sympathised with them, and himself commanded the sympathies of the lower classes. Gordon, as the most daring horse-breaker in the colony, and the beau-ideal of the bushman in his code of honour and manliness, was the best possible candidate, and was returned at the head of the poll.

In the South Australian Parliament, though his ideas about land legislation were good, and have since become law, Gordon was a failure. The slowness of the proceedings wearied him. His own speeches, stuffed with classical allusions, were ill-delivered and over the heads of his audience. All he got out of Parliament lay in his long hours of hard study in the magnificent library. His properties began to turn out badly, he lost money on the race-course, and in less than two years threw up his seat.

Right at the beginning of his parliamentary career he made himself famous by winning the principal steeplechase at the Adelaide Races. He had already won many local steeplechases, and was soon to win important steeplechases in Victoria, famous all over the world for its steeplechasing.

From this time forward events hurried him on to 'Glory coupled with an early tomb.'

He sold his cottage in Adelaide, and determined to live in his old home in the Mount Gambier district of South Australia, on the wreck of his fortune, and what he could make out of writing. He had already, in 1865 and 1866, contributed 'Ye Wearie Wayfarer' and 'Hippodromania' to the Melbourne papers. Some months later (in 1867) he started a livery business in Ballarat, taking the stables of the principal hotel, where he was soon joined by Harry Mount, brother of Lambton Mount, his partner on his West Australian station. This, partly owing to a bad accident, partly to his unbusiness-like habits, resulted in a disastrous failure within a year, and finally, after paying visits in Melbourne for several months, he settled there in the middle of 1869 to make a living as he could.

Almost immediately he began a remarkable list of successes. At a bound he became the most famous steeplechase rider in Australia.

On October 5, 1868, he seems to have left Ballarat for good, and to have come to Melbourne on a visit to Robert Power, the first of a series of visits which lasted till the middle of 1869. On October 10, he won three steeplechases in one day at the Melbourne Steeplechase meeting, on Babbler, Viking, and Cadger; and a month later he won the V.R.C. steeplechase on

Viking. His best poems almost synchronised, for he wrote 'A Song of Autumn' in October or November 1868, and published 'Doubtful Dreams' in *The Colonial Monthly* of December 1868, while in January 1869 he wrote, reclining on a bough of an old gum-tree at Yallum, 'The Sick Stockrider,' 'How We Beat the Favourite,' 'From the Wreck,' and 'Wolf and Hound.' In September 1867 he had brought out his first volumes, *Sea-Spray and Smoke-Drift* and *Ashtaroath*.

He went on winning steeplechases to the middle of 1869, and writing fine poems at intervals. Then he established himself and his wife in the lodging at Brighton, which proved to be his last home. From that time onwards he seems to have won few races and written few poems. In truth, his mind was beginning to be filled up with the idea of succeeding to the Esslemont estate, to which, as head of his family, his friends at home believed him to be entitled.

Esslemont is a fine mansion in Aberdeenshire, with a good rent-roll attached to it, and, though Gordon had no desire to play the laird, he would have liked the income to help him to provide for his wife; and he doubtless would have liked those who had refused to allow him to compete in the Ladies' Purse Steeplechase in South Australia to see him installed in the 'Barony' of Esslemont. The sporting chance he had of obtaining it did not conduce to his following up quietly the fair prospects and the fame of a career of steeplechasing, training, and writing which lay open before him, and in March 1870 the need of immediate ready money made him accept, against his judgment, the mount on Prince Rupert which led to the fall from which he never properly recovered. When, three

months later, he had the further misfortune to have his hopes of Esslemont dashed to the ground, while at the same time his monetary troubles were closing round him, he just waited to see his last and best volume, *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes*, through the press, and went out and shot himself the first thing on the following morning.

A whole chapter of accidents prevented any interference with his mad purpose. His friend Mr. Prendergast, whom he tried to see on his way to the scene of the suicide, was out. The Riddochs, his best friends in the hour of need, were far away in South Australia, and, when he actually lay dead in the scrub, were planning to make him come and stay with them lest he should do violence to himself after the bad news about Esslemont. And, worst of all, Lambton Mount, his chivalrous and much-loved partner in West Australia, who could have stopped it by raising his little finger, arrived in Melbourne a week after his death, having wasted more than that time in looking for a lost horse. Mr. Mount told me this with his own lips, and mentioned at the same time the terrible loss which English literature has suffered by his carrying out the instructions in the last letter Gordon ever wrote to him:—‘Please burn that old trunk of mine. Give the shepherds my old clothes; take the trunk and put it on the fire—turn it upside down on the camp-fire without looking at or reading anything.’ If Lambton Mount had known that Gordon had contemplated suicide, not one of the many quires of manuscript written on lined blue foolscap (the paper on which Gordon always wrote) would have been destroyed. As it was, only one escaped. ‘About a



week afterwards,' added Mr. Mount, 'one of the shepherds came back to me—he couldn't read. "I found this paper," he said, "in the pocket of the breeches, sir, which you gave me that belonged to Mr. Gordon." It was the poem which begins, "All night I've heard the marsh frog's croak." I sent it to *The Australasian*.'

And Mr. Mount told me that the loss was aggravated by the fact that Mrs. Gordon also burnt a box of Gordon's manuscripts after his death, to avoid the expense of removal.

Gordon and he lived together for six whole months on end, seeing each other all day and every day, and he was left with a passionate admiration for Gordon.

Gordon, he says, was the finest man he ever met in the course of his adventurous career. He was the sort of man who always took the heavy end of the log. There was only one thing that could make him depart a hair's-breadth from the truth, and that was to save a man's life or a woman's honour. He never demanded a receipt. To give examples of Gordon's courage, physical and moral, would be unending repetition. Mr. Mount records a hitherto unrecorded accident which Gordon had about six months before his death, which would account for his unwillingness to ride Prince Rupert. Gordon was staying with Mr. Mount's brother Harry at a farm outside Ballarat. He was riding a colt 'that could jump a house,' and put him at a five-rail fence. 'Stop, Gordon!' cried Harry Mount, 'the ground is rotten!' But Gordon put him at it, and the horse struck the top rail. Being a good rider he was not shot over the fence, where the ground was soft and he would have been clear of the horse, but

kept his seat, and the horse rolled on him, crushing one complete side and his head. Blood came out of his eyes, nose, ears, and mouth. He did not recover consciousness for four days. Harry Mount went back, got his buggy, and drove him into Ballarat Hospital, His mind was never quite right afterwards.

Lambton Mount says that the poem called 'The Old Leaven,' which Gordon only wrote in the rough and never finished, was autobiographical. It was written on the night before he left Gordon to go to West Australia. They were at the theatre together, hearing quite a good Italian opera company. Before the opera was over, Gordon went out, and Mr. Mount, when he got to the hotel, found him writing a poem at high steam. When Mr. Mount went in, Gordon went on writing without looking up, repeating out loud the lines:

'Who knows? Not I; I can hardly vouch  
For the truth of what little I see;  
And, now, if you've any weed in your pouch,  
Just hand it over to me.'

Mr. Mount, not understanding, handed him his pouch, and Gordon wrote no more.

The latest information which has reached me from Australia itself is the very important article contributed to the *Sydney Mail* by Mr. W. Farmer Whyte, drawn from the Gordon manuscripts which he has lately purchased from Mrs. Kelly, who was Gordon's landlady at Brighton, near Melbourne, at the time of his death. There were two paragraphs in it relating to facts hitherto unknown to me, the correspondence of Gordon's uncle, Captain R. C. H. Gordon, with Mr. Kelly, and a love affair which Gordon had in Australia before he met his wife.

‘Among the papers there is also a bill for rent, which reads as follows:—

A. L. Gordon

Dr. to W. H. Kelly.

37 weeks’ rent at £1 per week, £37 0 0

Eggs, . . . . . 3 15 8

---

£40 15 8

---

‘Apparently after Gordon’s death Mr. Kelly had written to the poet’s uncle in England in reference to this debt, for I find the following letter, signed R. C. H. Gordon, and dated August 31, 1871:—

‘My Dear Mr. Kelly,—

I received your letter dated 16th June ’71. It gave me great pleasure to hear from you, and to know how very kind you had been to my nephew, Lindsay Gordon, as Major Baker had told me. I will give him your thanks if I had an opportunity. No cause was assigned to me for my nephew’s last act. I suppose he was troubled about money; and I know of the strangeness of manner in the family. I have heard no more of Mrs. Lindsay Gordon than that Mr. Robt. Power sent her my little help. I am very sorry I cannot repay you more. I fear £30 is still due to you.

‘Lindsay’s poems are very much admired by all my friends to whom I have lent them, as truly poetical and clever. I am very much obliged to you for your nice letter.

‘I remain yours truly obliged for your kindness to  
L. Gordon, R. C. H. GORDON.’

‘*An Old Romance*. In the particular book I refer

to, opposite the "In Memoriam" verses, written by Kendall, are four short lines which remind me that Gordon had loved and been loved before he met Maggie Park. They are signed "E. M. W. S.," and are dated July 19, 1901. The lines are—

"The voice of him I loved is still,  
The restless brain is quiet;  
The troubled heart has ceased to beat,  
And the surging blood to riot."

'I am told that the lady who wrote these lines is Mrs. Shepherd, who lives in South Australia, and who always wears a gold cross that Adam Lindsay Gordon gave her. The story is that Gordon, who felt that he could put his feelings into writing better than he could express them in speech, wrote an offer of marriage to the lady who afterwards became Mrs. Shepherd, and sent a black boy to deliver it. The black boy carried out this part of the contract, and, furthermore, waited for a letter in reply; but when he got back to Gordon's home he found the poet walking up and down "muttering wildly" (he was probably repeating some verses he had written), and becoming frightened, ran away, taking the letter with him. Gordon waited a long time, and receiving no answer to his proposal of marriage, never troubled the lady further. But she had written accepting the offer.'

#### GORDON AS A POET<sup>1</sup>

Beyond dispute Gordon is the national poet of Australia. In Victoria and South Australia nearly

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from my Introduction to Gordon as a Poet in *Adam Lindsay Gordon and his Friends in England and Australia*.

every family owns Gordon's Poems, and they are better known than any English poet's are known in England. And rightly, because Gordon is the voice of Australia. But for him Australian literature would be less loyal than it is to the Old Country. For all Australians respect a man who was so much after their own heart; who would square up to anybody, or put a horse at anything; who loved the bush like a home, and extorted the admiration of all bushmen; who founded Australia's school of grim fatalism; who voiced Australia's code of honour.

Adam Lindsay Gordon was the national poet of Australia, not only because he was a real poet and wrote living poetry about the romantic old colonial days when Australia was in the making, but because he was a typical example of the fine strain which gave the Australian people its greatest qualities.

. . . . .

Gordon was Byronic. He began with escapades and eccentricities of dress. From a boy he loved to use his fists, and, if he did not get into the School XI. like Byron, he had won steeplechases at an age when most boys are absorbed in the sports of public schools. Like Byron, he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Like Byron's, the shades of gloom closed in round his manhood until he sank into an early grave. The phoenix rose from the ashes of both. And, if Gordon's fame is not as world-wide as Byron's, he has this to console him, that, while Byron's hold on his countrymen is now intellectual only, he enjoys the passionate love of Australia. He is Australia's hero as well as her poet. Perhaps no poet ever enjoyed such a personal devotion.

In England, as in Australia, he won the attention of every one by his fearlessness ; and he won the affection of all who were in his immediate circle by his merry spontaneous nature. But his lightheartedness led to his sowing wild oats, and they seemed to his father so wild that he shipped him off to Australia, not, we must believe, so much with the idea of ridding himself of a nuisance, as with the idea that his son's courage and adventurousness might be turned to good account in the lawless atmosphere of the Great Gold Rush. We may think this, because he procured for him a commission for which the poet never applied, in the South Australian 'Mounted Police. Gordon preferred to enlist in the same corps as a constable, and from that moment the steady improvement in his character began.

Gordon had many misfortunes and hardships in Australia, but every year he grew more manly and respected, and in his last days, when he was broken by accidents and poverty, we find him the valued and intimate friend, and a favourite guest in the houses of the most prominent men in their respective colonies, like the Riddochs and the Powers.

Gordon's poems, which are so full of the open air in their atmosphere, were all composed out of doors. They were only copied out indoors. Some may have been jotted down on odd scraps of paper, but for a man with a verbal memory like Gordon's, it could have been no effort to compose a poem and carry it in his head for some time before he wrote it down. I have never heard if Gordon knew his own poems by heart, but he certainly knew the whole of

Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* by heart; and he could spout prodigious quantities of Scott, Byron, Browning, and Swinburne—not to mention Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Homer.

The fact stands out that these poems, which are so dolent of the bush, were written in the bush by one who made the bush his life. Their background is full of the broad effects which would have been his atmosphere to a short-sighted man who spent his life in the bush. But his bad eyesight prevented him from filling in details of the foreground. The country round Mount Gambier, with its lakes and floods, must have been full of snakes: Gordon hardly mentions them. He mentions a few trees—various gums, the wattle, the blackwood, the she-oak, the tea-tree, and the honeysuckle, but hardly any flowers except the wattle and tea-tree blossoms. He has nothing to say about the resplendent parakeets, which are gayer than the flowers in Australia, and are found there by millions, or about huge birds like the Emu, the Eaglehawk, the Wild Swan, the Pelican, the Native Companion, the Wild Turkey, and the Bustard.

A few times he mentions the Dingo or wild dog, but never, or hardly ever, the innumerable opossums, wild cats, and native bears. He has very little to say about any lizards, though they come next in numbers after the ants, and nothing about the enormous iguana. Even the corn-grower's curse, the great white cockatoo, which comes down in flocks that whiten a field and sweep it bare like locusts, hardly crosses our vision.

Gordon makes his bush effects with bushmen. He

used little else except sounds, light and darkness, heat and shade.

And this method has great advantages because it makes his poems truly *dramatic lyrics*—not musings about still life—scenery or natural history, like so many forest poems, even Kendall's. The Kendall method produces the better poetry and more good writers, but the world at large will always be more interested in dramatic lyrics, and personally I think that Gordon, with his literary offspring Rudyard Kipling, stands at the very top of the tree in this form of writing. I do not, of course, claim for them the technical finish of the great masters of poetical style, but Browning achieved his fame without any respect for perfection of metre and vocabulary, and both Gordon (who could recite Browning by the page) and Mr. Kipling have a splendid and haunting swing, and have swept into the net of poetry a miraculous draught of expressions and experiences of common life. Gordon gave the bushman and the jockey his halo of poetry; Mr. Kipling laid it on the head of Tommy Atkins (the descendant of the archers of Crécy and Poitiers), the engineer, the merchant seaman, and the flotsam of Empire. These two have put the theories of Walt Whitman into a more articulate form. They have sung in ringing ballads the struggles of the men who lead hard and dangerous lives in their everyday round. Their song is always of battle, though their battles are not always those of knights in mail, or clashing armies. They are the poets of action.

The curious feature in the matter is that Gordon, much the more classical of the two in language and subject, led a wild bush life, while Mr. Kipling has



always written as an observer, not drawing on his own experiences. It is his genius which has enabled him to put himself inside the minds of his heroes. It is on him that the mantle of Gordon, the laureate of the brave, has fallen, rather than on the writers of bush ballads, who are spoken of as the school of Gordon.

. . . . .

The sources of Gordon's popularity as a poet are personality, subject, and style. Chief among them is the intense personality which vibrates through the poems. Gordon is never a Wordsworth, filling his hives steadily from all the suitable flowers round him. He never writes poems as intellectual exercises—as essays in rhyme and rhythm on phases supplied by nature or domestic incidents. His poems well up from his heart like strong springs, and sweep the reader along with them. In other words he is a *vates*, the word which the Romans applied to a great poet in all senses of the word—not only as a maker of verses, but as a prophet and a preacher who has a message to deliver. He was one of those curious vessels chosen by the Lord to stop the passer-by, and force him to take an interest in the enigma of life. That wonderful personality, so arrestive, so splendid, so tragic, must have been given him for the purpose.

Subject, of course, counted for an immense deal in Gordon's popularity. But it was not till his last days that Gordon wrote of sport consciously because people were interested in sport, and the verses he wrote under that influence, except 'Visions in the Smoke,' which may have been written already and

merely served as the sample which secured him the order for the others, are, but for their knowledge of horses and their metrical merits, among the least valuable of Gordon's poems. Up to this he had written of sport because sport was the matter that lay nearest to his hand. Like Walt Whitman he had said, nothing is unsuitable for poetry which can be made a vehicle for feeling and creation.

But his magnificent 'How We Beat the Favourite,' and the ringing, manful, breezy, picturesque poetical proverbs of 'Ye Wearie Wayfarer,' belong to a very different order. Gordon wrote those because he felt Australia in his veins. I know from personal experience what this means to a young man, for I went to Australia straight from Oxford when I was little older than Gordon, and going up on stations in the western district of Victoria belonging to various connections of my family, spent months in sheer exultation over the forest primeval of the Otway, the plains that lost themselves in the horizon, the glittering Australian climate, the champagne-like air, the long days in the saddle, the shooting of extraordinary game, the flashing by of parrots and cockatoos, the hiss of the angry snake, the excitements of raging floods and raging bush-fires. And all except the climate Gordon must have felt a hundredfold. In my time we went into the forest on purpose to get the wild life, as one takes a rough shooting in the Hebrides; in Gordon's time the whole country was only just emerging from its primeval state; the blacks were still a menace to solitary stations farther north, though curiously enough Gordon never alludes to raids by the blacks, and hardly alludes to the blacks at all, probably

because the subject<sup>1</sup> of the reprisals by the settlers was distasteful to him. In Gordon's time one had often to ride from station to station through the bush. To Adelaide itself from Mount Gambier he once rode through the ninety-mile desert. The memories of the Great Gold Rush were still fresh; the bushranger was still abroad in the land. Life was full of stimulants which were watered down by my time.

Yet I felt intoxicated with that year I spent on stations in Australia, and I had not chafed against the conditions of my life in England.

How much more then should Gordon, who was for ever kicking against the pricks in England, have rejoiced like a young colt in the wild life of his time? What could be more natural than that his exultation should have found vent in poetry—the poetry which he met in his everyday surroundings.

It is this which makes those early sporting poems so spontaneous, so original, so irresistible.

The third element in the popularity of Gordon was the charm of the style he evolved. Gordon was familiar with the sporting verses which had been written by hunting-men in England, but, unlike most sporting men, he also loved all good poetry—Latin and Greek and French as well as English. So he was able to improve his models. What made him better than all other sporting poets was that he was a much better poet than any of them, and that he had exactly the ear for devising and executing the ringing metres which his subjects demanded. There is no other volume of sporting poetry so dashing as Gordon's,

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. George Riddoch informs me that the blacks in the Gordon country were very civilised.

dashing in subject, style, and metre. Gordon was a genius. Kipling is the only other genius who has written English poetry in the vernacular, and he is not a sporting poet.

But Gordon was not a poet of the first order. He had not the broad humanity, the serene power of a Homer, a Chaucer, a Shakespeare, or a Longfellow. Within his narrow range he was strong, but his range was somewhat narrow. He was, however, a true poet, as is shown by his universal and growing popularity in his own land. A poet who appeals to the lettered and the unlettered alike, who is popular with the student and popular with the stable-boy, must be a true poet. A man may appeal to a class as the mouth-piece of that class; he cannot appeal to all classes alike if he be not genuine.

Gordon's 'Sick Stockrider' is the essence of the man. It displays, in a marked degree, his eloquence, his ringing rhythm, his knowledge of the bush; and it is the child of his history, the genuine outcome of his wild heart. Had he never written another piece, his fame would have been assured.

The manly melancholy of Gordon's poetry rings true.

DOUGLAS SLADEN.

The Avenue House,  
Richmond, Surrey,  
Aug. 12, 1912.

## Part I

### *Bush and Horse Poems*

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#### THE SICK STOCKRIDER <sup>1</sup>

HOLD hard, Ned ! Lift me down once more, and lay  
me in the shade.

Old man, you 've had your work cut out to guide  
Both horses, and to hold me in the saddle when I  
swayed,

All through the hot, slow, sleepy, silent ride.  
The dawn at ' Moorabinda ' was a mist-rack dull and  
dense,

The sunrise was a sullen, sluggish lamp ;  
I was dozing in the gateway at Arbuthnot's bound'ry  
fence,

I was dreaming on the Limestone cattle camp.  
We crossed the creek at Carricksford, and sharply  
through the haze,

And suddenly the sun shot flaming forth ;  
To southward lay ' Katâwa,' with the sandpeaks all  
ablaze,

And the flushed fields of Glen Lomond lay to north.  
Now westward winds the bridle-path that leads to  
Lundisfarm,

And yonder looms the double-headed Bluff ;  
From the far side of the first hill, when the skies are  
clear and calm,

You can see Sylvester's woolshed fair enough.

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<sup>1</sup> Written on the bough of the old gum-tree while he was  
staying with John Riddoch at Yallum in January 1869.

Five miles we used to call it from our homestead to  
the place

Where the big tree spans the roadway like an arch;  
'Twas here we ran the dingo down that gave us such  
a chase

Eight years ago—or was it nine?—last March.

'Twas merry in the glowing morn, among the gleaming  
grass,

To wander as we've wandered many a mile,  
And blow the cool tobacco cloud, and watch the white  
wreaths pass,

Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.

'Twas merry 'mid the blackwoods, when we spied the  
station roofs,

To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard,  
With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of  
hoofs;

Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard!

Aye! we had a glorious gallop after 'Starlight' and  
his gang,

When they bolted from Sylvester's on the flat;  
How the sun-dried reed-beds crackled, how the flint-  
strewn ranges rang

To the strokes of 'Mountaineer' and 'Acrobat.'  
Hard behind them in the timber, harder still across  
the heath,

Close beside them through the tea-tree scrub we dashed;  
And the golden-tinted fern leaves, how they rustled  
underneath!

And the honeysuckle osiers, how they crashed!

We led the hunt throughout, Ned, on the chestnut  
and the grey,

And the troopers were three hundred yards behind,  
While we emptied our six-shooters on the bush-  
rangers at bay,

In the creek with stunted box-tree for a blind!

There you grappled with the leader, man to man and  
horse to horse,

And you rolled together when the chestnut reared ;  
He blazed away and missed you in that shallow  
watercourse—

A narrow shave—his powder singed your beard !

In these hours when life is ebbing, how those days  
when life was young

Come back to us ; how clearly I recall  
Even the yarns Jack Hall invented, and the songs  
Jem Roper sung ;

And where are now Jem Roper and Jack Hall ?

Aye ! nearly all our comrades of the old colonial  
school,

Our ancient boon companions, Ned, are gone ;  
Hard livers for the most part, somewhat reckless as  
a rule,

It seems that you and I are left alone.

There was Hughes, who got in trouble through that  
business with the cards,

It matters little what became of him ;  
But a steer ripped up MacPherson in the Cooraminta  
yards,

And Sullivan was drowned at Sink-or-swim ;  
And Mostyn—poor Frank Mostyn—died at last a  
fearful wreck,

In ' the horrors,' at the Upper Wandinong,  
And Carisbrooke, the mder, at the Horsefall broke  
his neck,

Faith ! the wonder was he saved his neck so long !  
Ah ! those days and nights we squandered at the  
Logans' in the glen—

The Logans, man and wife, have long been dead.  
Elsie's tallest girl seems taller than your little Elsie  
then ;

And Ethel is a woman grown and wed.

I've had my share of pastime, and I've done my  
share of toil,

And life is short—the longest life a span ;  
I care not now to tarry for the corn or for the oil,  
Or for the wine that maketh glad the heart of man.  
For good undone and gifts misspent and resolutions  
vain,

'Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I know—  
I should live the same life over, if I had to live again ;  
And the chances are I go where most men go.

The deep blue skies wax dusky, and the tall green  
trees grow dim,

The sward beneath me seems to heave and fall ;  
And sickly, smoky shadows through the sleepy sun-  
light swim,

And on the very sun's face weave their pall.  
Let me slumber in the hollow where the wattle  
blossoms wave,

With never stone or rail to fence my bed ;  
Should the sturdy station children pull the bush  
flowers on my grave,  
I may chance to hear them romping overhead.

### FROM THE WRECK<sup>1</sup>

'TURN out, boys'—'What's up with our super.  
to-night ?

The man's mad—Two hours to daybreak I'd  
swear—

Stark mad—why, there isn't a glimmer of light.'

'Take Bolingbroke, Alec, give Jack the young mare ;  
Look sharp. A large vessel lies jammed on the reef,  
And many on board still, and some washed on shore.

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<sup>1</sup> Written on the bough of the old gum-tree while he was  
staying with John Riddoch at Yallum in January 1869.



Ride straight with the news—they may send some relief

From the township ; and we—we can do little more  
You, Alec, you know the near cuts ; you can cross  
The “ Sugarloaf ” ford with a scramble, I think ;  
Don’t spare the blood filly, nor yet the black horse ;  
Should the wind rise, God help them ! the ship  
will soon sink.

Old Peter ’s away down the paddock, to drive  
The nags to the stockyard as fast as he can—  
A life and death matter ; so, lads, look alive,  
Half-dressed, in the dark to the stockyard we ran.

There was bridling with hurry, and saddling with haste,

Confusion and cursing for lack of a moon ;  
‘ Be quick with these buckles, we’ve no time to waste ’ ;

‘ Mind the mare, she can use her hind legs to some tune.’

‘ Make sure of the crossing-place ; strike the old track,  
They’ve fenced off the new one ; look out for the holes

On the wombat hills.’ ‘ Down with the slip rails ;  
stand back.’

‘ And ride, boys, the pair of you, ride for your souls.’

In the low branches heavily laden with dew,

In the long grasses spoiling with deadwood that day,  
Where the blackwood, the box, and the bastard oak  
grew,

Between the tall gum-trees we galloped away—  
We crashed through a brush fence, we splashed  
through a swamp—

We steered for the north near ‘ The Eaglehawk’s  
Nest ’—

We bore to the left, just beyond ‘ The Red Camp,’  
And round the black tea-tree belt wheeled to the  
west—

We crossed a low range sickly scented with musk  
From wattle-tree blossom—we skirted a marsh—  
Then the dawn faintly dappled with orange the dusk,  
And pealed overhead the jay's laughter note harsh,  
And shot the first sunstreak behind us, and soon  
The dim dewy uplands were dreamy with light;  
And full on our left flashed 'the reedy lagoon,'  
And sharply 'The Sugarloaf' reared on our right.  
A smothered curse broke through the bushman's  
brown beard,  
He turned in his saddle, his brick-coloured cheek  
Flushed feebly with sundawn, said, 'Just what I  
feared;  
Last fortnight's late rainfall has flooded the creek.'  
Black Bolingbroke snorted, and stood on the brink  
One instant, then deep in the dark, sluggish swirl  
Plunged headlong I saw the horse suddenly sink,  
Till round the man's armpits the wave seemed to  
curl.  
We followed,—one cold shock, and deeper we sank  
Than they did, and twice tried the landing in vain;  
The third struggle won it; straight up the steep bank  
We staggered, then out on the skirts of the plain.  
The stockrider, Alec, at starting had got  
The lead, and had kept it throughout; 'twas his  
boast  
That through thickest of scrub he could steer like  
a shot,  
And the black horse was counted the best on the  
coast.  
The mare had been awkward enough in the dark,  
She was eager and headstrong, and barely half  
broke;  
She had had me too close to a big stringybark,  
And had made a near thing of a crooked sheoak;  
But now on the open, lit up by the morn,  
She flung the white foam-flakes from nostril to neck,

And chased him—I hatless, with shirtsleeves all  
torn

(For he may ride ragged who rides from a wreck)—  
And faster and faster across the wide heath

We rode till we raced. Then I gave her her head,  
And she—stretching out with the bit in her teeth—

She caught him, outpaced him, and passed him,  
and led.

We neared the new fence; we were wide of the track;  
I looked right and left—she had never been tried  
At a stiff leap. 'Twas little he cared on the black.

'You're more than a mile from the gateway,' he  
cried.

I hung to her head, touched her flank with the spurs  
(In the red streak of rail not the ghost of a gap);  
She shortened her long stroke, she pricked her sharp  
ears,

She flung it behind her with hardly a rap—  
I saw the post quiver where Bolingbroke struck,  
And guessed that the pace we had come the last  
mile

Had blown him a bit (he could jump like a buck).

We galloped more steadily then for a while.

The heath was soon passed, in the dim distance lay  
The mountain. The sun was just clearing the tips  
Of the ranges to eastward. The mare—could she  
stay?

She was bred very nearly as clean as Eclipse;  
She led, and as oft as he came to her side,

She took the bit free and untiring as yet;  
Her neck was arched double, her nostrils were wide,

And the tips of her tapering ears nearly met—

'You're lighter than I am,' said Alec at last;

'The horse is dead beat and the mare isn't blown.  
She must be a good one—ride on and ride fast,

You know your way now.' So I rode on alone.

Still galloping forward we passed the two flocks  
At M'Intyre's hut and M'Allister's hill—  
She was galloping strong at the Warrigal Rocks—  
On the Wallaby Range she was galloping still—  
And over the wasteland and under the wood,  
By down and by dale, and by fell and by flat,  
She galloped, and here in the stirrups I stood  
To ease her, and there in the saddle I sat  
To steer her. We suddenly struck the red loam  
Of the track near the troughs—then she reeled on  
the rise—  
From her crest to her croup covered over with foam,  
And blood-red her nostrils and bloodshot her eyes,  
A dip in the dell where the wattle fire bloomed—  
A bend round a bank that had shut out the view—  
Large framed in the mild light the mountain had  
loomed,  
With a tall purple peak bursting out from the blue.

I pulled her together, I pressed her, and she  
Shot down the decline to the Company's yard,  
And on by the paddocks, yet under my knee  
I could feel her heart thumping the saddle-flaps hard.  
Yet a mile and another, and now we were near  
The goal, and the fields and the farms flitted past ;  
And 'twixt the two fences I turned with a cheer,  
For a green, grass-fed mare 'twas a far thing and fast ;  
And labourers roused by her galloping hoofs,  
Saw bare-headed rider and foam-sheeted steed ;  
And shone the white walls and the slate-coloured roofs  
Of the township. I steadied her then—I had  
need—  
Where stood the old chapel (where stands the new  
church—  
Since chapels to churches have changed in that  
town).  
A short, sidelong stagger, a long forward lurch,  
A slight choking sob, and the mare had gone down.

I slipped off the bridle, I slackened the girth,  
I ran on and left her and told them my news ;  
I saw her soon afterwards. What was she worth ?  
How much for her hide ? She had never worn shoes.

WOLF AND HOUND<sup>1</sup>

‘The hills like giants at a hunting lay  
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay.’—BROWNING.

You ’LL take my tale with a little salt,  
But it needs none, nevertheless,  
I was foiled completely, fairly at fault,  
Disheartened, too, I confess.  
At the splitter’s tent I had seen the track  
Of horse-hoofs fresh on the sward,  
And though Darby Lynch and Donovan Jack  
(Who could swear through a ten-inch board)  
Solemnly swore he had not been there,  
I was just as sure that they lied,  
For to Darby all that is foul was fair,  
And Jack for his life was tried.

We had run him for seven miles and more  
As hard as our nags could split ;  
At the start they were all too weary and sore,  
And his was quite fresh and fit.  
Young Marsden’s pony had had enough  
On the plain, where the chase was hot ;  
We breasted the swell of the Bittern’s Bluff,  
And Mark couldn’t raise a trot ;  
When the sea, like a splendid silver shield,  
To the south-west suddenly lay ;  
On the brow of the Beetle the chestnut reeled,  
And I bid good-bye to M’Crea—

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<sup>1</sup> Written on the bough of the old gum-tree while he was staying with John Riddoch at Yallum in January 1869.

And I was alone when the mare fell lame,  
With a pointed flint in her shoe,  
On the Stony Flats : I had lost the game,  
And what was a man to do ?

I turned away with no fixed intent  
And headed for Hawthorndell ;  
I could neither eat in the splitter's tent  
Nor drink at the splitter's well ;  
I knew that they gloried in my mishap,  
And I cursed them between my teeth—  
A blood-red sunset through Brayton's Gap  
Flung a lurid fire on the heath.

Could I reach the Dell ? I had little reck,  
And with scarce a choice of my own  
I threw the reins on Miladi's neck—  
I had freed her foot from the stone.  
That season most of the swamps were dry,  
And after so hard a burst  
In the sultry noon of so hot a sky  
She was keen to appease her thirst—  
Or by instinct urged or impelled by fate—  
I care not to solve these things—  
Certain it is that she took me straight  
To the Warrigal water springs.

I can shut my eyes and recall the ground  
As though it were yesterday—  
With a shelf of the low grey rocks girt round  
The springs in their basin lay ;  
Woods to the east and wolds to the north  
In the sundown sullenly bloomed ;  
Dead black on a curtain of crimson cloth  
Large peaks to the westward loomed.  
I led Miladi through weed and sedge,  
She leisurely drank her fill ;  
There was something close to the water's edge  
And my heart with one leap stood still,

For a horse's shoe and a rider's boot  
Had left clean prints on the clay ;  
Some one had watered his beast on foot.  
'Twas he—he had gone. Which way ?  
Then the mouth of the cavern faced me fair,  
As I turned and fronted the rocks ;  
So, at last, I had pressed the wolf to his lair,  
I had run to his earth the fox.

I thought so. Perhaps he was resting. Perhaps  
He was waiting, watching for me.  
I examined all my revolver caps,  
I hitched my mare to a tree—  
I had sworn to have him, alive or dead,  
And to give him a chance was loth.  
He knew his life had been forfeited—  
He had even heard of my oath.  
In my stockinged soles to the shelf I crept,  
I crawled safe into the cave—  
All silent—if he was there he slept  
Not there. All dark as the grave.

Through the crack I could hear the leaden hiss !  
See the livid face through the flame !  
How strange it seems that a man should miss  
When his life depends on his aim !  
There couldn't have been a better light  
For him, nor a worse for me.  
We were cooped up, caged like beasts for a fight,  
And dumb as dumb beasts were we.

Flash ! flash ! bang ! bang ! and we blazed away  
And the grey roof reddened and rang ;  
Flash ! flash ! and I felt his bullet flay  
The tip of my ear. Flash ! bang !  
Bang ! flash ! and my pistol arm fell broke ;  
I struck with my left hand then—  
Struck at a corpse through a cloud of smoke—  
I had shot him dead in his den !

GONE<sup>1</sup>

IN Collins Street standeth a statue tall—  
A statue tall on a pillar of stone,  
Telling its story, to great and small,  
Of the dust reclaimed from the sand-waste lone ;  
Weary and wasted, and worn and wan,  
Feeble and faint, and languid and low,  
He lay on the desert a dying man,  
Who has gone, my friends, where we all must go

There are perils by land, and perils by water,  
Short, I ween, are the obseques  
Of the landsman lost, but they may be shorter  
With the mariner lost in the trackless seas ;  
And well for him, when the timbers start,  
And the stout ship reels and settles below,  
Who goes to his doom with as bold a heart  
As that dead man gone where we all must go.

Man is stubborn his rights to yield,  
And redder than dews at eventide  
Are the dews of battle, shed on the field,  
By a nation's wrath or a despot's pride ;  
But few who have heard their death-knell roll,  
From the cannon's lips where they faced the foe,  
Have fallen as stout and steady of soul  
As that dead man gone where we all must go.

Traverse yon spacious burial-ground,  
Many are sleeping soundly there,  
Who passed with mourners standing around,  
Kindred, and friends, and children fair ;

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<sup>1</sup> This poem refers to the death of Burke and Wills, the explorers, in Central Australia, January 28, 1860.



Did he envy such ending ? 'twere hard to say ;  
Had he cause to envy such ending ? no ;  
Can the spirit feel for the senseless clay  
When it once has gone where we all must go ?

What matters the sand or the whitening chalk,  
The blighted herbage, the black'ning log,  
The crooked beak of the eagle-hawk,  
Or the hot, red tongue of the native dog ?  
That couch was rugged, those sextons rude,  
Yet, in spite of a leaden shroud, we know  
That the bravest and fairest are earth-worms' food,  
When once they've gone where we all must go.

With the pistol clenched in his failing hand,  
With the death mist spread o'er his fading eyes,  
He saw the sun go down on the sand,  
And he slept, and never saw it rise ;  
'Twas well ; he toiled till his task was done,  
Constant and calm in his latest throe,  
The storm was weathered, the battle was won,  
When he went, my friends, where we all must go.

God grant that whenever, soon or late,  
Our course is run and our goal is reached,  
We may meet our fate as steady and straight  
As he whose bones in yon desert bleached ;  
No tears are needed—our cheeks are dry,  
We have none to waste upon living woe ;  
Shall we sigh for one who has ceased to sigh,  
Having gone, my friends, where we all must go ?

We tarry yet, we are toiling still,  
He is gone and he fares the best,  
He fought against odds, he struggled uphill,  
He has fairly earned his season of rest ;  
No tears are needed—fill out the wine,  
Let the goblets clash, and the grape juice flow ;  
Ho ! pledge me a death-drink, comrade mine,  
To a brave man gone where we all must go.

HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE<sup>1</sup>

## A LAY OF THE LOAMSHIRE HUNT CUP

'Aye, squire,' said Stevens, 'they back him at evens ;  
The race is all over, bar shouting, they say ;  
The Clown ought to beat her ; Dick Neville is sweeter  
Than ever—he swears he can win all the way.

'A gentleman rider—well, I'm an outsider,  
But if he's a gent who the mischief's a jock ?  
You swells mostly blunder, Dick rides for the plunder,  
He rides, too, like thunder—he sits like a rock.

'He calls "hunted fairly" a horse that has barely  
Been stripped for a trot within sight of the hounds,  
A horse that at Warwick beat Birdlime and Yorick,  
And gave Abdelkader at Aintree nine pounds.

'They say we have no test to warrant a protest ;  
Dick rides for a lord and stands in with a steward ;  
The light of their faces they show him—his case is  
Prejudged and his verdict already secured.

'But none can outlast her, and few travel faster,  
She strides in her work clean away from The Drag ;  
You hold her and sit her, she couldn't be fitter,  
Whenever you hit her she'll spring like a stag.

'And perhaps the green jacket, at odds though they  
back it,  
May fall, or there's no knowing what may turn up.  
The mare is quite ready, sit still and ride steady,  
Keep cool ; and I think you may just win the Cup.'

---

<sup>1</sup> Written on the bough of the old gum-tree while he was staying with John Riddoch at Yallum in January 1869.



GEORGE STEVENS ON THE COLONEL winner of the GRAND NATIONAL in 1869 and 1870

*Reproduced by permission from the oil painting in the possession of his son George Stevens, Esq*

Dark-brown with tan muzzle, just stripped for the  
tussle,

Stood Iseult, arching her neck to the curb,  
A lean head and fiery, strong quarters and wiry,  
A loin rather light, but a shoulder superb.

Some parting injunction, bestowed with great unction,  
I tried to recall, but forgot like a dunce,  
When Reginald Murray, full tilt on White Surrey,  
Came down in a hurry to start us at once.

'Keep back in the yellow! Come up on Othello!  
Hold hard on the chestnut! Turn round on The  
Drag!

Keep back there on Spartan! Back you, sir, in  
tartan!

So, steady there, easy,' and down went the flag.

We started, and Kerr made strong running on  
Mermaid,

Through furrows that led to the first stake-and-  
bound,  
The crack, half extended, looked bloodlike and  
splendid,

Held wide on the right where the headland was  
sound.

I pulled hard to baffle her rush with the snaffle,

Before her two-thirds of the field got away,  
All through the wet pasture where floods of the last  
year

Still loitered, they clotted my crimson with clay.

The fourth fence, a wattle, floored Monk and Blue-  
bottle;

The Drag came to grief at the blackthorn and ditch,  
The rails toppled over Redoubt and Red Rover,

The lane stopped Lycurgus and Leicestershire  
Witch.

She passed like an arrow Kildare and Cock Sparrow,  
And Mantrap and Mermaid refused the stone wall ;  
And Giles on The Greyling came down at the paling,  
And I was left sailing in front of them all.

I took them a burster, nor eased her nor nursed her  
Until the Black Bullfinch led into the plough,  
And through the strong bramble we bored with  
scramble—

My cap was knocked off by the hazel-tree bough.

Where furrows looked lighter I drew the rein tighter—  
Her dark chest all dappled with flakes of white  
foam,

Her flanks mud-bespattered, a weak rail she shat-  
tered—

We landed on turf with our heads turned for home.

Then crashed a low binder, and then close behind  
her

The sword to the strokes of the favourite shook ;  
His rush roused her mettle, yet ever so little  
She shortened her stride as we raced at the brook.

She rose when I hit her. I saw the stream glitter,  
A wide scarlet nostril flashed close to my knee,  
Between sky and water The Clown came and caught  
her,

The space that he cleared was a caution to see.

And forcing the running, discarding all cunning,  
A length to the front went the rider in green ;  
A long strip of stubble, and then the big double,  
Two stiff flights of rails with a quickset between.

She raced at the rasper, I felt my knees grasp her,  
I found my hands give to her strain on the bit,  
She rose when The Clown did—our silks as we bounded  
Brushed lightly, our stirrups clashed loud as we lit.

A rise steeply sloping, a fence with stone coping—  
 The last—we diverged round the base of the hill;  
 His path was the nearer, his leap was the clearer,  
 I flogged up the straight, and he led sitting still.

She came to his quarter, and on still I brought her,  
 And up to his girth, to his breast-plate she drew;  
 A short prayer from Neville just reach'd me, 'The  
 Devil,'  
 He muttered—locked level the hurdles we flew.

A hum of hoarse cheering, a dense crowd careering,  
 All sights seen obscurely, all shouts vaguely heard;  
 'The green wins!' 'The crimson!' The multitude  
 swims on,  
 And figures are blended and features are blurred.

'The horse is her master!' 'The green forges past  
 her!'  
 'The Clown will outlast her!' 'The Clown wins!'  
 'The Clown!'

The white railing races with all the white faces,  
 The chestnut outpaces, outstretches the brown.

On still past the gateway she strains in the straight-  
 way,  
 Still struggles, 'The Clown by a short neck at most,'  
 He swerves, the green scourges, the stand rocks and  
 surges,  
 And flashes, and verges, and flits the white post.

Aye! so ends the tussle,—I knew the tan muzzle  
 Was first, though the ring-men were yelling 'Dead  
 heat!'  
 A nose I could swear by, but Clarke said 'The mare by  
 A short head.' And that's how the favourite was  
 beat.

## YE WEARIE WAYFARER

## HYS BALLAD IN EIGHT FYTTES

*FYTTE I*BY WOOD AND WOLD<sup>1</sup>

## A PREAMBLE

‘Beneath the greenwood bough.’—W. SCOTT

LIGHTLY the breath of the spring wind blows,  
Though laden with faint perfume,  
’Tis the fragrance rare that the bushman knows,  
The scent of the wattle bloom.  
Two-thirds of our journey at least are done,  
Old horse ! let us take a spell  
In the shade from the glare of the noon-day sun,  
Thus far we have travelled well ;  
Your bridle I ’ll slip, your saddle ungirth,  
And lay them beside this log,  
For you ’ll roll in that track of reddish earth,  
And shake like a water-dog.

Upon yonder rise there ’s a clump of trees—  
Their shadows look cool and broad—  
You can crop the grass as fast as you please  
While I stretch my limbs on the sward ;  
’Tis pleasant, I ween, with a leafy screen  
O’er the weary head, to lie  
On the mossy carpet of emerald green,  
’Neath the vault of the azure sky ;  
Thus all alone by the wood and wold,  
I yield myself once again  
To the memories old that, like tales fresh told,  
Come fitting across the brain.

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<sup>1</sup> Written in October 1866.

## FYTTE II

BY FLOOD AND FIELD<sup>1</sup>

## A LEGEND OF THE COTTISWOLD

They have saddled a hundred milk-white steeds,  
They have bridled a hundred black.'—*Old Ballad*

He turned in his saddle, now follow who dare  
I ride for my country, quoth . . .'—LAWRENCE.

I REMEMBER the lowering wintry morn,  
And the mist on the Cotswold hills,  
Where I once heard the blast of the huntsman's horn,  
Not far from the seven rills.  
Jack Esdale was there, and Hugh St. Clair,  
Bob Chapman, and Andrew Kerr,  
And big George Griffiths on Devil-May-Care,  
And—black Tom Oliver.  
And one who rode on a dark brown steed,  
Clean jointed, sinewy, spare,  
With the lean game head of the Blacklock breed,  
And the resolute eye that loves the lead,  
And the quarters massive and square—  
A tower of strength, with a promise of speed  
(There was Celtic blood in the pair).

I remember how merry a start we got,  
When the red fox broke from the gorse,  
In a country so deep, with a scent so hot,  
That the hound could outpace the horse;  
I remember how few in the front rank showed,  
How endless appeared the tail,  
On the brown hillside, where we crossed the road  
And headed towards the vale.

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<sup>1</sup> Written in October 1866.



The dark brown steed on the left was there,  
On the right was a dappled grey,  
And between the pair on a chestnut mare  
The duffer who writes this lay.  
What business had 'this child' there to ride ?  
But little or none at all ;  
Yet I held my own for a while in ' the pride  
That goeth before a fall.'  
Though rashness can hope for but one result,  
We are heedless when fate draws nigh us,  
And the maxim holds good, '*Quem perdere vult  
Deus, dementat prius.*'

The right hand man to the left hand said,  
As down in the vale we went,  
'Harden your heart like a millstone Ned,  
And set your face as flint ;  
Solid and tall is the rasping wall  
That stretches before us yonder ;  
You must have it at speed or not at all,  
'Twere better to halt than to ponder,  
For the stream runs wide on the take-off side,  
And washes the clay bank under ;  
Here goes for a pull, 'tis a madman's ride,  
And a broken neck if you blunder.'

No word in reply his comrade spoke,  
Nor wavered, nor once looked round,  
But I saw him shorten his horse's stroke  
As we splashed through the marshy ground ;  
I remember the laugh that all the while  
On his quiet features played :—  
So he rode to his death, with that careless smile,  
In the van of the ' Light Brigade ' ;  
So stricken by Russian grape, the cheer  
Rang out while he toppled back,  
From the shattered lungs as merry and clear  
As it did when it roused the pack.



CAPTAIN ADAM DURNFORD GORDON THE CHELTENHAM  
COLONEL NEWCOME—FATHER OF THE POET AND FOR 11  
YEARS HINDUSTANI MASTER AT CHELTENHAM COLLEGE

*From a miniature lent by Miss Frances Gordon*

Let never a tear his memory stain,  
 Give his ashes never a sigh,  
 One of many who perished, NOT IN VAIN,  
 AS A TYPE OF OUR CHIVALRY—

I remember one thrust he gave to his hat,  
 And two to the flanks of the brown,  
 And still as a statue of old he sat,  
 And he shot to the front, hands down ;  
 I remember the snort and the stag-like bound  
 Of the steed six lengths to the fore,  
 And the laugh of the rider while, landing sound,  
 He turned in his saddle and glanced around ;  
 I remember—but little more,  
 Save a bird's-eye gleam of the dashing stream,  
 A jarring thud on the wall,  
 A shock and the blank of a nightmare's dream—  
 I was down with a stunning fall.

### FYTTE III

#### ZU DER EDLEN JAGD<sup>1</sup>

A TREATISE ON TREES—VINE-TREE v.  
 SADDLE-TREE

'Now, welcome, welcome, masters mine,  
 Thrice welcome to the noble chase,  
 Nor earthly sport, nor sport divine,  
 Can take such honourable place.'  
*Ballad of the Wild Huntsman* (Free translation)

I REMEMBER some words my father said,  
 When I was an urchin vain ;—  
 God rest his soul, in his narrow bed  
 These ten long years he hath lain.

---

<sup>1</sup> Written in November 1866.

When I think one drop of the blood he bore  
This faint heart surely must hold,  
It may be my fancy and nothing more,  
But the faint heart seemeth bold.

He said that as from the blood of grape,  
Or from juice distilled from the grain,  
False vigour, soon to evaporate,  
Is lent to nerve and brain,  
So the coward will dare on the gallant horse  
What he never would dare alone,  
Because he exults in a borrowed force,  
And a hardihood not his own.

And it may be so, yet this difference lies  
'Twixt the vine and the saddle-tree,  
The spurious courage that drink supplies  
Sets our baser passions free ;  
But the stimulant which the horseman feels  
When he gallops fast and straight,  
To his better nature most appeals,  
And charity conquers hate.

As the kindly sunshine thaws the snow,  
E'en malice and spite will yield,  
We could almost welcome our mortal foe  
In the saddle by flood and field ;  
And chivalry dawns in the merry tale  
That ' Market Harborough ' writes,  
And the yarns of ' Nimrod ' and ' Martingale '  
Seem legends of loyal knights.

Now tell me for once, old horse of mine,  
Grazing round me loose and free,  
Does your ancient equine heart repine  
For a burst in such companie,  
Where ' the Powers that be ' in the front rank ride,  
To hold your own with the throng,  
Or to plunge at ' Faugh-a-Ballagh's ' side  
In the rapids of Dandenong ?

Don't tread on my toes, you 're no foolish weight,  
 So I found to my cost, as under  
 Your carcase I lay, when you rose too late,  
 Yet I blame you not for the blunder.  
 What ! sulky old man, your under lip falls !  
 You think I, too, ready to rail am  
 At your kinship remote to that duffer at walls,  
 The talkative roadster of Balaam.

## FYTTE IV

IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS<sup>1</sup>

## A LOGICAL DISCUSSION

'Then hey for boot and horse, lad !  
 And round the world away !  
 Young blood will have its course, lad !  
 And every dog his day !'—C. KINGSLEY.

THERE 's a formula which the west country clowns  
 Once used, ere their blows fell thick,  
 At the fairs on the Devon and Cornwall downs  
 In their bouts with the single-stick.  
 You may read a moral, not far amiss,  
 If you care to moralise,  
 In the crossing-guard, where the ash-plants kiss,  
 To the words ' God spare our eyes.'  
 No game was ever yet worth a rap  
 For a rational man to play,  
 Into which no accident, no mishap,  
 Could possibly find its way.

If you hold the willow, a shooter from Wills  
 May transform you into a hopper,  
 And the football meadow is rife with spills,  
 If you feel disposed for a cropper ;

---

<sup>1</sup> Written in November 1866.

In a rattling gallop with hound and horse  
You may chance to reverse the medal  
On the sward, with the saddle your loins across,  
And your hunter's loins on the saddle;  
In the stubbles you 'll find it hard to frame  
A remonstrance firm, yet civil,  
When oft as 'our mutual friend' takes aim,  
Long odds may be laid on the rising game,  
And against your gaiters level;  
There's danger even where fish are caught  
To those who a wetting fear;  
For what's worth having must aye be bought,  
And sport's like life and life's like sport,  
'It ain't all skittles and beer.'

The honey-bag lies close to the sting,  
The rose is fenced by the thorn,  
Shall we leave to others their gathering,  
And turn from clustering fruits that cling  
To the garden wall in scorn?  
Albeit those purple grapes hang high,  
Like the fox in the ancient tale,  
Let us pause and try, ere we pass them by,  
Though we, like the fox, may fail.

All hurry is worse than useless; think  
On the adage, 'Tis pace that kills';  
Shun bad tobacco, avoid strong drink,  
Abstain from Holloway's pills,  
Wear woollen socks, they're the best you 'll  
find,  
Beware how you leave off flannel;  
And, whatever you do, don't change your mind  
When once you have picked your panel;  
With a bank of cloud in the south-south-east  
Stand ready to shorten sail;  
Fight shy of a corporation feast;  
Don't trust to a martingale;

Keep your powder dry, and shut one eye,  
Not both, when you touch your trigger ;  
Don't stop with your head too frequently  
(This advice ain't meant for a nigger) ;  
Look before you leap, if you like, but if  
You mean leaping, don't look long,  
Or the weakest place will soon grow stiff,  
And the strongest doubly strong ;  
As far as you can, to every man,  
Let your aid be freely given,  
And hit out straight, 'tis your shortest plan,  
When against the ropes you 're driven.

Mere pluck, though not in the least sublime,  
Is wiser than blank dismay,  
Since ' No sparrow can fall before its time,'  
And we 're valued higher than they ;  
So hope for the best and leave the rest  
In charge of a stronger hand,  
Like the honest boors in the far-off west,  
With the formula terse and grand.

They were men, for the most part rough and  
rude,  
Dull and illiterate,  
But they nursed no quarrel, they cherished no  
feud,  
They were strangers to spite and hate ;  
In a kindly spirit they took their stand,  
That brothers and sons might learn  
How a man should uphold the sports of his land,  
And strike his best with a strong right hand,  
And take his strokes in return.  
' 'Twas a barbarous practice,' the Quaker cries,  
' 'Tis a thing of the past, thank heaven '—  
Keep your thanks till the combative instinct  
dies  
With the taint of the olden leaven ;

Yes, the times are changed, for better or  
worse,

The prayer that no harm befall  
Has given its place to a drunken curse,  
And the manly game to a brawl.

Our burdens are heavy, our natures weak,  
Some pastime devoid of harm  
May we look for ? ' Puritan elder, speak ! '  
' Yea, friend, peradventure thou mayest seek  
Recreation singing a psalm.'  
If I did, your visage so grim and stern  
Would relax in a ghastly smile,  
For of music I never one note could learn,  
And my feeble minstrelsy would turn  
Your chant to discord vile.

Though the Philistine's mail could naught  
avail,

Nor the spear like a weaver's beam,  
There are episodes yet in the Psalmist's tale,  
To obliterate which his poems fail,  
Which his exploits fail to redeem.

Can the Hittite's wrongs forgotten be ?  
Does HE warble '*Non nobis Domine*,'  
With his monarch in blissful concert, free  
From all malice to flesh inherent ;  
Zeruiah's offspring, who served so well,  
Yet between the horns of the altar fell—  
Does HIS voice the '*Quid gloriaris*' swell,  
Or the '*Quare fremuerunt*' ?

It may well be thus, where DAVID sings,  
And Uriah joins in the chorus,  
But while earth to earthy matter clings,  
Neither you nor the bravest of Judah's kings  
As a pattern can stand before us.



## FYTTE V

LEX TALIONIS<sup>1</sup>

## A MORAL DISCOURSE

'And if there's blood upon his hand.  
'Tis but the blood of deer'—W SCOTT.

To beasts of the field, and fowls of the air,  
And fish of the sea alike,  
Man's hand is ever slow to spare,  
And ever ready to strike ;  
With a licence to kill, and to work our will,  
In season by land or by water,  
To our heart's content we may take our fill  
Of the joys we derive from slaughter.

And few, I reckon, our rights gainsay  
In this world of rapine and wrong,  
Where the weak and the timid seem lawful prey  
For the resolute and the strong ;  
Fins, furs, and feathers, they are and were  
For our use and pleasure created,  
We can shoot, and hunt, and angle, and snare,  
Unquestioned, if not unsated.

I have neither the will nor the right to blame,  
Yet to many (though not to all)  
The sweets of destruction are somewhat tame,  
When no personal risks befall ;  
Our victims suffer but little we trust  
(Mere guess-work and blank enigma),  
If they suffer at all, our field sports must  
Of cruelty bear the stigma.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published November 10, 1866.

Shall we, hard-hearted to their fates, thus  
Soft-hearted shrink from our own,  
When the measure we mete is meted to us,  
When we reap as we 've always sown ?  
Shall we who for pastime have squandered life,  
Who are styled ' the Lords of Creation,'  
Recoil from our chance of more equal strife,  
And our risk of retaliation ?

Though short is the dying pheasant's pain,  
Scant pity you may well spare,  
And the partridge slain is a triumph vain,  
And a risk that a child may dare ;  
You feel, when you lower the smoking gun,  
Some ruth for yon slaughtered hare,  
And hit or miss, in your selfish fun  
The widgeon has little share.

But you 've no remorseful qualms or pangs  
When you kneel by the grizzly's lair,  
On that conical bullet your sole chance hangs,  
'Tis the weak one's advantage fair,  
And the shaggy giant's terrific fangs  
Are ready to crush and tear ;  
Should you miss, one vision of home and friends,  
Five words of unfinished prayer,  
Three savage knife-stabs, so your sport ends  
In the worrying grapple that chokes and rends, —  
Rare sport, at least, for the bear.

Short shrift ! sharp fate ! dark doom to dree !  
Hard struggle, though quickly ending !  
At home or abroad, by land or sea,  
In peace or war, sore trials must be,  
And worse may happen to you or to me,  
For none are secure, and none can flee  
From a destiny impending.

Ah ! friend, did you think when the *London* sank,  
Timber by timber, plank by plank,  
In a cauldron of boiling surf,

How alone at least, with never a flinch,  
In a rally contested inch by inch,  
You could fall on the trampled turf ?  
When a livid wall of the sea leaps high,  
In the lurid light of a leaden sky,  
And bursts on the quarter railing ;  
While the howling storm-gust seems to vie  
With the crash of splintered beams that fly,  
Yet fails too oft to smother the cry  
Of women and children wailing ?

Then those who listen in sinking ships,  
To despairing sobs from their loved one's lips,  
Where the green wave thus slowly shatters,  
May long for the crescent-claw that rips  
The bison into ribbons and strips,  
And tears the strong elk to tatters.  
Oh ! sunderings short of body and breath !  
Oh ! ' battle and murder and sudden death ! '  
Against which the Liturgy preaches ;  
By the will of a just, yet a merciful Power,  
Less bitter, perchance, in the mystic hour,  
When the wings of the shadowy angel lower,  
Than man in his blindness teaches !

## FYTTÉ VI

### POTTERS' CLAY<sup>1</sup>

#### AN ALLEGORICAL INTERLUDE

' Nec propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.'

THOUGH the pitcher that goes to the sparkling rill  
Too oft gets broken at last,  
There are scores of others its place to fill  
When its earth to the earth is cast ;

---

<sup>1</sup> Published November 10, 1866.

Keep that pitcher at home, let it never roam,  
 But lie like a useless clod,  
 Yet sooner or later the hour will come  
 When its chips are thrown to the sod.

Is it wise, then, say, in the waning day,  
 When the vessel is cracked and old,  
 To cherish the battered potters' clay,  
 As though it were virgin gold ?  
 Take care of yourself, dull, boorish elf,  
 Though prudent and safe you seem,  
 Your pitcher will break on the musty shelf.  
 And mine by the dazzling stream.

### FYTTE VII

#### CITO PEDE PRETERIT ÆTAS<sup>1</sup>

##### A PHILOSOPHICAL DISSERTATION

'Gillian's dead, God rest her bier—  
 How I loved her many years syne ;  
 Marion's married, but I sit here,  
 Alive and merry at three-score year,  
 Dipping my nose in Gascoigne wine '  
*Wamba's Song*—THACKERAY.

A MELLOWER light doth Sol afford,  
 His meridian glare has passed,  
 And the trees on the broad and sloping sward  
 Their lengthening shadows cast.  
 'Time flies.' The current will be no joke,  
 If swollen by recent rain,  
 To cross in the dark, so I 'll have a smoke,  
 And then I 'll be off again.

What's up, old horse ? Your ears you prick,  
 And your eager eyeballs glisten ;

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<sup>1</sup> Published November 17, 1866.

'Tis the wild dog's note in the tea-tree thick,  
By the river, to which you listen.  
With head erect, and tail flung out,  
For a gallop you seem to beg,  
But I feel the qualm of a chilling doubt  
As I glance at your favourite leg.

Let the dingo rest, 'tis all for the best,  
In this world there 's room enough  
For him and you and me and the rest,  
And the country is awful rough.  
We 've had our gallop in days of yore,  
Now down the hill we must run ;  
Yet at times we long for one gallop more,  
Although it were only one.

Did our spirits quail at a new four-rail,  
Could a ' double ' double-bank us,  
Ere nerve and sinew began to fail  
In the consulship of Plancus ?  
When our blood ran rapidly, and when  
Our bones were pliant and limber,  
Could we stand a merry cross-counter then,  
A slogging fall over timber ?

Arcades ambo ! Duffers both,  
In our best of days, alas !  
(I tell the truth, though to tell it loth)  
'Tis time we were gone to grass ;  
The young leaves shoot, the sere leaves fall,  
And the old gives way to the new,  
While the preacher cries, ' 'Tis vanity all,  
And vexation of spirit too.'

Now over my head the vapours curl  
From the bowl of the soothing clay,  
In the misty forms that eddy and whirl  
My thoughts are fitting away ;

Yes, the preacher's right, 'tis vanity all,  
But the sweeping rebuke he showers  
On vanities all may heaviest fall  
On vanities worse than ours.

We have no wish to exaggerate  
The worth of the sports we prize,  
Some toil for their church, and some for their state  
And some for their merchandise ;  
Some traffic and trade in the city's mart,  
Some travel by land and sea,  
Some follow science, some cleave to art,  
And some to scandal and tea ;

And some for their country and their queen  
Would fight, if the chance they had,  
Good sooth, 'twere a sorry world, I ween,  
If we all went galloping mad ;  
Yet if once we efface the joys of the chase  
From the land, and out-root the Stud,  
GOOD-BYE TO THE ANGLO-SAXON RACE !  
FAREWELL TO THE NORMAN BLOOD !

Where the burn runs down to the uplands brown  
From the heights of the snow-clad range,  
What anodyne drawn from the stifling town  
Can be reckoned a fair exchange  
For the stalker's stride, on the mountain side,  
In the bracing northern weather,  
To the slopes where couch, in their antlered pride.  
The deer on the perfumed heather.

Oh ! the vigour with which the air is rife !  
The spirit of joyous motion ;  
The fever, the fulness of animal life,  
Can be drained from no earthly potion !  
The lungs with the living gas grow light,  
And the limbs feel the strength of ten,  
While the chest expands with its maddening might,  
GOD'S GLORIOUS OXYGEN.

Thus the measured stroke, on elastic sward,  
Of the steed three parts extended,  
Hard held, the breath of his nostrils broad,  
With the golden ether blended ;  
Then the leap, the rise from the springy turf,  
The rush through the buoyant air,  
And the light shock landing—the veriest serf  
Is an emperor then and there !

Such scenes ! sensation and sound and sight !  
To some undiscovered shore  
On the current of Time's remorseless flight  
Have they swept to return no more ?  
While, like phantoms bright of the fevered night,  
That have vexed our slumbers of yore,  
You follow us still in your ghostly might,  
Dead days that have gone before.

Vain dreams, again and again retold,  
Must you crowd on the weary brain,  
Till the fingers are cold that entwined of old  
Round foil and trigger and rein,  
Till stayed for aye are the roving feet,  
Till the restless hands are quiet,  
Till the stubborn heart has forgotten to beat,  
Till the hot blood has ceased to riot ?

In Exeter Hall the saint may chide,  
The sinner may scoff outright,  
The Bacchanal steeped in the flagon's tide,  
Or the sensual Sybarite ;  
But NOLAN's name will flourish in fame,  
When our galloping days are past,  
When we go to the place from whence we came,  
Perchance to find rest at last.

Thy riddles grow dark, oh ! drifting cloud,  
And thy misty shapes grow drear,  
Thou hang'st in the air like a shadowy shroud,  
But I am of lighter cheer

Though our future lot is a sable blot,  
 Though the wise ones of earth will blame us,  
 Though our saddles will rot, and our rides be forgot,  
 'DUM VIVIMUS, VIVAMUS !'

### FYTTE VIII

#### FINIS EXOPTATUS <sup>1</sup>

##### A METAPHYSICAL SONG

'There's somewhat in this world amiss  
 Shall be unriddled by and by'—TENNYSON.

Boot and saddle, see, the slanting  
 Rays begin to fall,  
 Flinging lights and colours flaunting  
 Through the shadows tall.  
 Onward ! onward ! must we travel ?  
 When will come the goal ?  
 Riddle I may not unravel,  
 Cease to vex my soul.

Harshly break those peals of laughter  
 From the jays aloft,  
 Can we guess what they cry after,  
 We have heard them oft ;  
 Perhaps some strain of rude thanksgiving  
 Mingles in their song,  
 Are they glad that they are living ?  
 Are they right or wrong ?  
 Right, 'tis joy that makes them call so,  
 Why should they be sad ?  
 Certes ! we are living also,  
 Shall not we be glad ?  
 Onward ! onward ! must we travel ?  
 Is the goal more near ?  
 Riddle we may not unravel,  
 Why so dark and drear ?

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<sup>1</sup> Published November 24, 1866



Yon small bird his hymn outpouring  
On the branch close by,  
Recks not for the kestrel soaring  
In the nether sky,  
Though the hawk with wings extended  
Poises overhead,  
Motionless as though suspended  
By a viewless thread.  
See, he stoops, nay, shooting forward  
With the arrow's flight,  
Swift and straight away to nor'ward  
Sails he out of sight.  
Onward ! onward ! thus we travel,  
Comes the goal more nigh ?  
Riddle we may not unravel,  
Who shall make reply ?

Ha ! Friend Ephraim, saint or sinner,  
Tell me if you can—  
Though we may not judge the inner  
By the outer man,  
Yet by girth of broadcloth ample,  
And by cheeks that shine,  
Surely you set no example  
In the fasting line—

Could you, like yon bird, discovering,  
Fate as close at hand,  
As the kestrel o'er him hovering,  
Still, as he did, stand ?  
Trusting grandly, singing gaily,  
Confident and calm,  
Not one false note in your daily  
Hymn or weekly psalm ?

Oft your oily tones are heard in  
Chapel, where you preach,  
This the everlasting burden  
Of the tale you teach :

' We are d——d, our sins are deadly,  
You alone are healed '—  
'Twas not thus their gospel redly  
Saints and martyrs sealed.  
You had seemed more like a martyr  
Than you seem to us,  
To the beasts that caught a Tartar  
Once at Ephesus ;  
Rather than the stout apostle  
Of the Gentiles, who,  
Pagan-like, could cuff and wrestle,  
They 'd have chosen you.

Yet, I ween, on such occasion  
Your dissenting voice  
Would have been, in mild persuasion  
Raised against their choice ;  
Man of peace and man of merit,  
Pompous, wise, and grave,  
Ephraim ! is it flesh or spirit  
You strive most to save ?  
Vain is half this care and caution  
O'er the earthly shell,  
We can neither baffle nor shun  
Dark plumed Azrael.  
Onward ! onward ! still we wander,  
Nearer draws the goal ;  
Half the riddle 's read, we ponder  
Vainly on the whole.

Eastward ! in the pink horizon,  
Fleecy hillocks shame  
This dim range dull earth that lies on,  
Tinged with rosy flame.  
Westward ! as a stricken giant  
Stoops his bloody crest,  
And though vanquished, frowns defiant,  
Sinks the sun to rest.

Distant yet, approaching quickly,  
From the shades that lurk,  
Like a black pall gathers thickly  
Night, when none may work.  
Soon our restless occupation  
Shall have ceased to be ;  
Units ! in God's vast creation,  
Ciphers ! what are we ?  
Onward ! onward ! oh ! faint-hearted ;  
Nearer and more near  
Has the goal drawn since we started,  
Be of better cheer.

Preacher ! all forbearance ask, for  
All are worthless found,  
Man must aye take man to task for  
Faults while earth goes round.  
On this dank soil thistles muster,  
Thorns are broadcast sown ;  
Seek not figs where thistles cluster,  
Grapes where thorns have grown.

Sun and rain and dew from heaven,  
Light and shade and air,  
Heat and moisture freely given,  
Thorns and thistles share.  
Vegetation rank and rotten  
Feels the cheering ray ;  
Not uncared for, unforgotten,  
We, too, have our day.

Unforgotten ! though we cumber  
Earth, we work His will.  
Shall we sleep through night's long slumber  
Unforgotten still ?  
Onward ! onward ! toiling ever,  
Weary steps and slow,  
Doubting oft, despairing never,  
To the goal we go !

Hark ! the bells on distant cattle  
Waft across the range,  
Through the golden-tufted wattle,  
Music low and strange ;  
Like the marriage peal of fairies  
Comes the tinkling sound,  
Or like chimes of sweet St. Mary's  
On far English ground.  
How my courser champs the snaffle,  
And with nostril spread,  
Snorts and scarcely seems to ruffle  
Fern leaves with his tread ;  
Cool and pleasant on his haunches  
Blows the evening br  ze,  
Through the overhanging branches  
Of the wattle trees :  
Onward ! to the Southern Ocean,  
Glides the breath of Spring.  
Onward, with a dreamy motion,  
I, too, glide and sing—  
Forward ! forward ! still we wander—  
Tinted hills that lie  
In the red horizon yonder—  
Is the goal so nigh ?

Whisper, spring-wind, softly singing,  
Whisper in my ear ;  
Respite and nepenthe bringing,  
Can the goal be near ?  
Laden with the dew of vespers,  
From the fragrant sky,  
In my ear the wind that whispers  
Seems to make reply—

‘ Question not, but live and labour  
Till yon goal be won,  
Helping every feeble neighbour,  
Seeking help from none ;

Life is mostly froth and bubble,  
Two things stand like stone,  
KINDNESS in another's trouble,  
COURAGE in your own.'

Courage, comrades, this is certain,  
All is for the best—  
There are lights behind the curtain—  
Gentles, let us rest.  
As the smoke-rack veers to seaward,  
From 'the ancient clay,'  
With its moral drifting leeward,  
Ends the wanderer's lay.

## HIPPODROMANIA ; OR, WHIFFS FROM THE PIPE

IN FIVE PARTS

### *PART I*

#### VISIONS IN THE SMOKE<sup>1</sup>

Rest, and be thankful ! On the verge  
Of the tall cliff, rugged and grey,  
By whose granite base the breakers surge,  
And shiver their frothy spray,  
Outstretched, I gaze on the eddying wreath  
That gathers and flits away,  
With the surf beneath, and between my teeth  
The stem of the 'ancient clay.'

With the anodyne cloud on my listless eyes,  
With its spell on my dreamy brain,

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<sup>1</sup> Written in 1865.

As I watch the circling vapours rise  
From the brown bowl up to the sullen skies,  
My vision becomes more plain,  
Till a dim kaleidoscope succeeds  
Through the smoke-rack drifting and veering,  
Like ghostly riders on phantom steeds  
To a shadowy goal careering.

In their own generation the wise may sneer,  
They hold our sports in derision ;  
Perchance to sophist, or sage, or seer  
Were allotted a graver vision.  
Yet if man, of all the Creator planned,  
His noblest work is reckoned,  
Of the works of His hand, by sea or by land,  
The horse may at least rank second.

Did they quail, those steeds of the squadrons light,  
Did they flinch from the battle's roar,  
When they burst on the guns of the Muscovite,  
By the echoing Black Sea shore ?  
On ! on ! to the cannon's mouth they stride,  
With never a swerve nor a shy,  
Oh ! the minutes of yonder maddening ride,  
Long years of pleasure outvie !

No slave, but a comrade staunch, in this,  
Is the horse, for he takes his share,  
Not in peril alone, but in feverish bliss,  
And in longing to do and dare.  
Where bullets whistle, and round shot whiz,  
Hoofs trample, and blades flash bare,  
God send me an ending as fair as his  
Who died in his stirrups there !

The wind has slumbered throughout the day,  
Now a fitful gust springs over the bay,  
My wandering thoughts no longer stray,  
I'll fix my overcoat buttons ;

Secure my old hat as best I may  
(And a shocking bad one it is, by the way),  
Blow a denser cloud from my stunted clay,  
And then, friend *Bell*, as the Frenchmen say,  
We'll 'go back again to our muttons.'

There's a lull in the tumult on yonder hill,  
And the clamour has grown less loud,  
Though the Babel of tongues is never still,  
With the presence of such a crowd.  
The bell has rung. With their riders up  
At the starting-post they muster,  
The racers stripped for the 'Melbourne Cup,'  
All gloss and polish and lustre;  
And the course is seen, with its emerald sheen,  
By the bright spring-tide renewed,  
Like a ribbon of green, stretched out between  
The ranks of the multitude.

The flag is lowered. 'They're off!' 'They  
come!'

The squadron is sweeping on;  
A sway in the crowd—a murmuring hum:  
'They're here!' 'They're past!' 'They're  
gone!'

They came with the rush of the southern surf,  
On the bar of the storm-girt bay;  
And like muffled drums on the sounding turf  
Their hoof-strokes echo away.

The rose and black draws clear of the ruck,  
And the murmur swells to a roar,  
As the brave old colours that never were struck,  
Are seen with the lead once more.  
Though the feathery ferns and grasses wave  
O'er the sod where Lantern sleeps,  
Though the turf is green on Fisherman's grave,  
The stable its prestige keeps.

Six lengths in front she scours along,  
She 's bringing the field to trouble,  
She 's tailing them off, she 's running strong,  
She shakes her head and pulls double.  
Now Minstrel falters, and Exile flags,  
The Barb finds the pace too hot,  
And Toryboy loiters, and Playboy lags,  
And the *bolt* of Ben Bolt is shot.

That she never may be caught this day,  
Is the worst that the public wish her.  
She won't be caught; she comes right away;  
Hurrah for Seagull and Fisher!  
See, Strop falls back, though his reins are slack,  
Sultana begins to tire,  
And the top-weight tells on the Sydney crack,  
And the pace on ' the Gippsland flyer.'

The rowels, as round the turn they sweep,  
Just graze Tim Whiffler's flanks;  
Like the hunted deer that flies through the sheep,  
He strides through the beaten ranks.  
Daughter of Omen, prove your birth,  
The colt will take lots of choking;  
The hot breath steams at your saddle-girth,  
From his scarlet nostril smoking.

The shouts of the Ring for a space subside,  
And slackens the bookmaker's roar;  
Now, Davis, rally; now, Carter, ride,  
As man never rode before.  
When Sparrowhawk's backers cease to cheer,  
When Yattendon's friends are dumb,  
When hushed is the clamour for Volunteer—  
Alone in the race they come!

They 're neck and neck; they 're head and head;  
They 're stroke for stroke in the running;  
The whalebone whistles, the steel is red,  
No shirking as yet nor shunning.

•



One effort, Seagull, the blood you boast  
Should struggle when nerves are strained ;—  
With a rush on the post, by a neck at the most,  
The verdict for Tim is gained.

Tim Whiffler wins. Is blood alone  
The *sine qua non* for a flyer ?  
The breed of his dam is a myth unknown,  
And we 've doubts respecting his sire.  
Yet few (if any) those proud names are,  
On the pages of peerage or stud,  
In whose 'scutcheon lurks no sinister bar,  
No taint of the base black blood.

Aye, Shorthouse, laugh—laugh loud and long,  
For pedigree you 're a sticker ;  
You may be right, I may be wrong,  
Wiseacres both ! Let 's liquor.  
Our common descent we may each recall  
To a lady of old caught tripping,  
The fair one in fig leaves, who d——d us all  
For a bite at a golden pippin.

When first on this rocky ledge I lay,  
There was scarce a ripple in yonder bay,  
The air was serenely still ;  
Each column that sailed from my swarthy clay  
Hung loitering long ere it passed away,  
Though the skies wore a tinge of leaden grey,  
And the atmosphere was chill.  
But the red sun sank to his evening shroud,  
Where the western billows are rolled  
Behind a curtain of sable cloud,  
With a fringe of scarlet and gold ;  
There 's a misty glare in the yellow moon,  
And the drift is scudding fast,  
There 'll be storm, and rattle, and tempest soon,  
When the heavens are overcast.

The neutral tint of the sullen sea  
Is flecked with the snowy foam,  
And the distant gale sighs drearily,  
As the wanderer sighs for his home.  
The white sea-horses toss their manes  
On the bar of the southern reef,  
And the breakers moan, and—by Jove, it rains  
(I thought I should come to grief);  
Though it can't well damage my shabby hat,  
Though my coat looks best when it's damp;  
Since the shaking I got (no matter where at),  
I've a mortal dread of the cramp.  
My matches are wet, my pipe's put out,  
And the wind blows colder and stronger;  
I'll be stiff, and sore, and sorry, no doubt,  
If I lie here any longer.

## PART II

### THE FIELDS OF COLERAINE<sup>1</sup>

ON the fields of Coleraine there'll be labour in vain  
Before the Great Western is ended,  
The nags will have toiled, and the silks will be soiled,  
And the rails will require to be mended.

For the gullies are deep, and the uplands are steep,  
And the mud will of purls be the token,  
And the tough stringy-bark, that invites us to lark,  
With impunity may not be broken.

Though Ballarat's fast, and they say he can last,  
And that may be granted hereafter,  
Yet the judge's decision to the Border division  
Will bring neither shouting nor laughter.

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<sup>1</sup> Published in 1866.

And Blueskin, I 've heard that he goes like a bird,  
And I 'm told that to back him would pay me ;  
He 's a good bit of stuff, but not quite good enough,  
' *Non licuit credere famæ.*'

Alfred ought to be there, we all of us swear  
By the blood of King Alfred, his sire ;  
He 's not the real jam, by the blood of his dam,  
So I shan't put him down as a flyer.

Now, Hynam, my boy, I wish you great joy,  
I know that when fresh you can jump, sir ;  
But you 'll scarce be in clover when you 're ridden  
all over,  
And punished from shoulder to rump, sir.

Archer goes like a shot, they can put on their pot,  
And boil it to cover expenses ;  
Their pot will boil over, the run of his Dover  
He 'll never earn over big fences.

There 's a horse in the race, with a blaze on his face,  
And we know he can gallop a dock ;  
He 's proved himself stout, of his speed there 's no  
doubt,  
And his jumping 's according to Cocker.

When Hynam 's outstripped, and when Alfred is  
whipped,  
To keep him in sight of the leaders,  
While Blueskin runs true, but his backers look blue,  
For his rider 's at work with the bleeders.

When his carcass of beef brings 'the bullock' to  
grief,  
And the rush of the tartan is ended ;  
When Archer 's in trouble—who 's that pulling double,  
And taking his leaps unextended ?

He wins all the way, and the rest—sweet, they say,  
 Is the smell of the newly-turned plough, friend,  
 But you smell it too close when it stops eyes and nose,  
 And you can't tell your horse from your cow, friend.

### PART III

#### CREDAT JUDÆUS APELLA <sup>1</sup>

DEAR BELL,—I enclose what you ask in a letter,  
 A short rhyme at random, no more and no less,  
 And you may insert it for want of a better,  
 Or leave it, it doesn't much matter, I guess ;  
 And as for a tip, why, there isn't much in it,  
 I may hit the right nail, but first, I declare,  
 I haven't a notion what 's going to win it  
 (The Champion, I mean), and what 's more, I don't  
 care.

Imprimis, there 's Cowra—few nags can go quicker  
 Than she can—and Smith takes his oath she can fly ;  
 While Brown, Jones, and Robinson swear she 's a  
 sticker,  
 But '*credat Judæus Apella*,' say I.

There 's old Volunteer, I 'd be sorry to sneer  
 At his chance ; he 'll be there, if he goes at the rate  
 He went at last year, when a customer queer,  
 Johnny Higginson, fancied him locked in the  
 straight ;  
 I 've heard that the old horse has never been fitter,  
 I 've heard all performances past he 'll outvie ;  
 He may gallop a docker, and finish a splitter,  
 But '*credat Judæus Apella*,' say I.

I know what they say, sir, 'The Hook' he can stay,  
 sir,  
 And stick to his work like a sleuth-hound or beagle ;

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<sup>1</sup> Published in 1866.

He stays 'with a hook,' and he sticks in the clay, sir,  
 I'd rather, for choice, pop my money on Seagull;  
 I'm told that the Sydney division will rue, sir,  
 Their rashness in front of the stand when they spy,  
 With a clear lead, the white jacket spotted with blue,  
 sir,  
 But '*credat Judæus Apella*,' say I.

There's The Barb—you may talk of your flyers and  
 stayers,

All bosh—when he strips you can see his eye range  
 Round his rivals, with much the same look as Tom  
 Sayers

Once wore, when he faced the big novice, Bill  
 Bainge.

Like Stow, at our hustings, confronting the hisses  
 Of roughs, with his queer Mephistopheles' smile;  
 Like Baker or Baker's more wonderful *Mrs.*,  
 The terror of blacks at the source of the Nile;  
 Like Triton 'mid minnows; like hawk among  
 chickens;

Like—anything better than everything else:  
 He stands at the post. Now they're off! the plot  
 thickens!

Quoth Stanley to Davis, 'How is your pulse?'  
 He skims o'er the smooth turf, he scuds through the  
 mire,

He waits with them, passes them, bids them good-  
 bye!

Two miles and three-quarters, cries Filgate, 'He'll tire.'  
 Oh! '*credat Judæus Apella*,' say I.

Lest my tale should come true, let me give you fair  
 warning,

You may 'shout' some cheroots, if you like, no  
 champagne

For this child.—'Oh! think of my head in the  
 morning,'

Old chap, you don't get me on that lay again.

The last time those games I looked likely to try on,  
 Says Bradshawe, 'You 'll feel very sheepish and  
 shy  
 When you are hauled up and cautioned by D—g—y  
 and L—n,'  
 Oh ! '*credat Judæus Apella*,' say I.

This writing bad verses is very fatiguing,  
 The brain and the liver against it combine,  
 And nerves with digestion in concert are leaguering,  
 To punish excess in the pen and ink line ;  
 Already I feel just as if I 'd been rowing  
 Hard all—on a supper of onions and tripe  
 (A thing I abhor), but my steam I've done blowing,  
 I am, my dear *Bell*, yours truly, 'The Pipe.'

P.S.—Tell J. P., if he fancies a good 'un,  
 That old chestnut pony of mine is for sale.

N.B.—His forelegs are uncommonly wooden,  
 I fancy the near one 's beginning to fail,  
 And why shouldn't I do as W—n does oft,  
 And swear that a cripple is sound—on the Bible—  
 Hold hard ! though the man I allude to is soft,  
 He 's game to go in for an action of libel

## PART IV

### BANKER'S DREAM<sup>1</sup>

OF chases and courses dogs dream, so do horses—  
 Last night I was dozing and dreaming,  
 The crowd and the bustle were there, and the rustle  
 Of the silk in the autumn sky gleaming.

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<sup>1</sup> Published April 20, 1867,

The stand thronged with faces, the broadcloth and  
laces,

The booths, and the tents, and the cars,  
The bookmakers' jargon, for odds making bargain,  
The nasty stale smell of cigars.

We formed into line, 'neath the merry sunshine,  
Near the logs at the end of the railing ;  
' Are you ready, boys ? Go ! ' cried the starter, and  
low  
Sank the flag, and away we went sailing.

In the van of the battle we heard the stones rattle,  
Some slogging was done, but no slaughter,  
A shout from the stand, and the whole of our band  
Skimmed merrily over the water.

Two fences we cleared, and the roadway we neared,  
When three of our troop came to trouble ;  
Like a bird on the wing, or a stone from a sling,  
Flew Cadger, first over the double.

And Western was there, head and tail in the air,  
And Pondon was there too—what noodle  
Could so name a horse ? I should feel some remorse  
If I gave such a name to a poodle.

In and out of the lane, to the racecourse again,  
Craig's pony was first, I was third, sir,  
And Ingleside lit in my tracks, with the bit  
In his teeth, and came up ' like a bird, ' sir.

In the van of the battle we heard the rails rattle,  
Says he, ' Though I don't care for shunning  
My share of the raps, I shall look out for gaps,  
When the light-weight 's away with the running.'

At the fence just ahead, the outsider still led,  
The chestnut played follow my leader,  
Oh ! the devil a gap, he went into it slap,  
And he and his jock took a header.

Says Ingleside, 'Mate, should the pony go straight,  
You've no time to stop or turn restave';  
Says I, 'Who means to stop? I shall go till I drop';  
Says he, 'Go it, old cuss, gay and festive.'

The fence stiff and tall, just beyond the log wall,  
We crossed, and the walls, and the water,—  
I took off too near, a small made fence to clear,  
And just touched the grass with my snorter.

At the next post and rail up went Western's bang tail,  
And down (by the very same token)  
To earth went his nose, for the panel he chose  
Stood firm and refused to be broken.

I dreamt some one said that the bay would have made  
The race safe, if he'd stood a while longer;  
If he had,—but, like if, there the panel stands stiff—  
He stood, but the panel stood stronger.

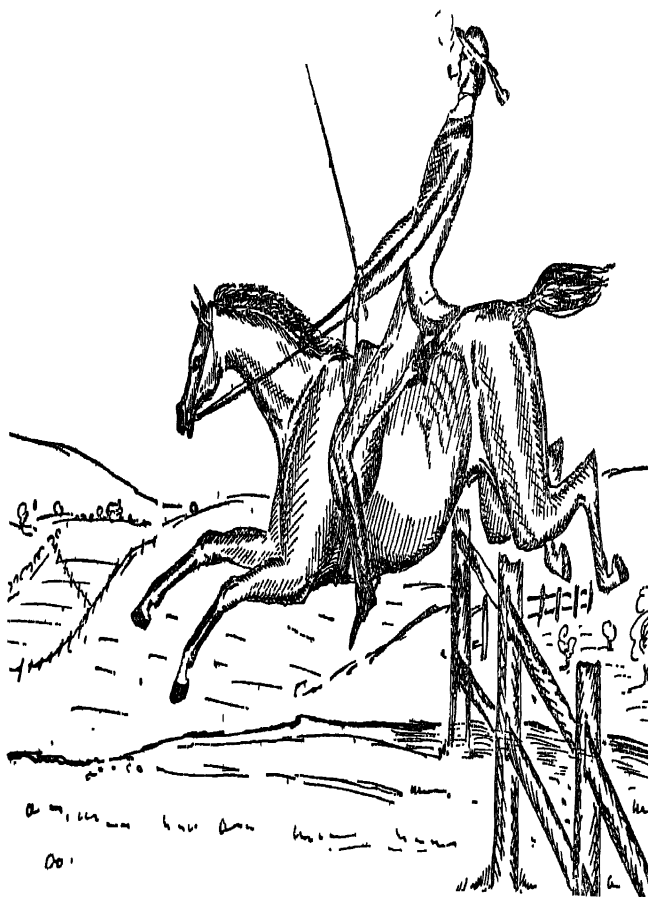
In and out of the road, with a clear lead still showed  
The violet fluted with amber;  
Says Johnson, 'Old man. catch him now if you can,  
'Tis the second time round you'll remember.'

At the road once again, pulling hard on the rein,  
Craig's pony popped in and popped out;  
I followed like smoke and the pace was no joke,  
For his friends were beginning to shout.

And Ingleside came to my side, strong and game,  
And once he appeared to outstrip me,  
But I felt the steel gore, and I shot to the fore,  
Only Cadger seemed likely to whip me.

In the van of the battle I heard the logs rattle,  
His stroke never seemed to diminish,  
And thrice I drew near him, and thrice he drew clear,  
For the weight served him well at the finish.





GORDON ON CADGER, WINNER OF THE METROPOLITAN STEEPLECHASE

Ha ! Cadger goes down, see, he stands on his crown—  
Those rails take a power of clouting—  
A long sliding blunder—he's up—well, I wonder  
If now it's all over but shouting.

All loosely he's striding, the amateur's riding  
All loosely, some reverie locked in  
Of a 'vision in smoke,' or a 'wayfaring bloke,'  
His poetical rubbish concocting.

Now comes from afar the faint cry, 'Here they are,'  
'The violet winning with ease,'  
'Fred goes up like a shot,' 'Does he catch him or  
not ?'  
Level money, I'll take the cerise.

To his haunches I spring, and my muzzle I bring  
To his flank, to his girth, to his shoulder ;  
Through the shouting and yelling I hear my name  
swelling,  
The hearts of my backers grow bolder.

Neck and neck ! head and head ! staring eye ! nostril  
spread !  
Girth and stifle laid close to the ground !  
Stride for stride ! stroke for stroke ! through one  
hurdle we've broke !  
On the splinters we've lit with one bound.

And 'Banker for choice' is the cry, and one voice  
Screams 'Six to four once upon Banker' ;  
'Banker wins,' 'Banker's beat,' 'Cadger wins,' 'A  
dead heat'—  
'Ah ! there goes Fred's whalebone a flanker.'

Springs the whip with a crack ! nine stone ten on his  
back,  
Fit and light he can race like the devil ;  
I draw past him—'tis vain ; he draws past me again,  
Springs the whip ! and, again we are level.

Steel and cord do their worst, now my head struggles  
first !

That tug my last spurt has expended—  
Nose to nose ! lip to lip ! from the sound of the whip  
He strains to the utmost extended.

How they swim through the air, as we roll to the  
chair,

Stand, faces, and railings flit past ;  
Now I spring . . .  
from my lair, with a snort and  
a stare,  
Roused by Fred with my supper at last.

## PART V

### EX FUMO DARE LUCEM<sup>1</sup>

#### 'TWIXT THE CUP AND THE LIP

##### *Prologue*

CALM and clear ! the bright day is declining,  
The crystal expanse of the bay,  
Like a shield of pure metal, lies shining  
'Twixt headlands of purple and grey,  
While the little waves leap in the sunset,  
And strike with a miniature shock,  
In sportive and infantine onset,  
The base of the iron-stone rock.

Calm and clear ! the sea-breezes are laden  
With a fragrance, a freshness, a power,  
With a song like the song of a maiden,  
With the scent like the scent of a flower ;

---

<sup>1</sup> August 3, 1867.

And a whisper, half weird, half prophetic,  
Comes home with the sigh of the surf ;—  
But I pause, for your fancies poetic  
Never rise from the level of 'Turf.'

Fellow-bungler of mine, fellow-sinner,  
In public performances past,  
In trials whence touts take their winner,  
In rumours that circulate fast,  
In strains from Prunella or Priam,  
Staying stayers, or goers that go,  
You 're much better posted than I am,  
'Tis little I care, less I know.

Alas ! neither poet nor prophet"  
Am I, though a jingler of rhymes—  
'Tis a hobby of mine, and I 'm off it  
At times, and I 'm on it at times ;  
And whether I 'm off it or on it,  
Your readers my counsels will shun,  
Since I scarce know Van Tromp from Blue Bonnet,  
Though I might know Cigar from The Nun.

With ' visions ' you ought to be sated  
And sickened by this time, I swear  
That mine are all myths, self-created,  
Air visions that vanish in air ;  
If I had some loose coins I might chuck one,  
To settle this question and say,  
' Here goes ! this is tails for the black one,  
And heads for my favourite, the bay.'

And must I rob Paul to pay Peter,  
Or Peter defraud to pay Paul ?  
My rhymes, are they stale ? if my metre  
Is varied, one chime rings through all ;  
One chime—though I sing more or sing less,  
I have but one string to my lute,  
And it might have been better if, stringless  
And songless, the same had been mute.

Yet not as a seer of visions,  
Nor yet as a dreamer of dreams,  
I send you these partial decisions  
On hackneyed, impoverished themes ;  
But with song out of tune, sung to pass time,  
Flung heedless to friends or to foes,  
Where the false notes that ring for the last time,  
May blend with some real ones, who knows ?

### *The Race*

On the hill they are crowding together,  
In the stand they are crushing for room,  
Like midge-flies they swarm on the heather,  
They gather like bees on the broom ;  
They flutter like moths round a candle—  
Stale similes, granted, what then ?  
I 've got a stale subject to handle,  
A very stale stump of a pen.

Hark ! the shuffle of feet that are many,  
Of voices the many-tongued clang—  
'Has he had a bad night ? ' 'Has he any  
Friends left ? '—How I hate your turf slang ;  
'Tis stale to begin with, not witty,  
But dull and inclined to be coarse,  
But bad men can't use (more 's the pity)  
Good words when they slate a good horse.

*Heu ! heu ! quantus equis* (that 's Latin  
For 'bellows to mend ' with the weeds),  
They 're off ! lights and shades ! silk and satin !  
A rainbow of riders and steeds !  
And one shows in front, and another  
Goes up and is seen in his place,  
*Sic transit* (more Latin)—Oh ! bother,  
Let 's get to the end of the race.

See, they come round the last turn careering,  
Already Tait's colours are struck,  
And the green in the vanguard is steering,  
And the red 's in the rear of the ruck !  
Are the stripes in the shade doomed to lie long ?  
Do the blue stars on white skies wax dim ?  
Is it Tamworth or Smuggler ? 'Tis Bylong  
That wins—either Bylong or Tim.

As the shell through the breach that is riven  
And sapped by the springing of mines,  
As the bolt from the thunder-cloud driven,  
That levels the larches and pines,  
Through yon mass parti-coloured that dashes  
Goal-turned, clad in many-hued garb,  
From rear to van, surges and flashes  
The yellow and black of The Barb.

Past The Fly, falling back on the right, and  
The Gull, giving way on the left,  
Past Tamworth, who feels the whip smite, and  
Whose sides by the rowels are cleft ;  
Where Tim and the chestnut together  
Still bear of the battle the brunt,  
As if eight stone twelve were a feather.  
He comes with a rush to the front.

Tim Whiffler may yet prove a Tartar,  
And Bylong 's the horse that can stay,  
But Kean is in trouble—and Carter  
Is hard on the satin-skinned bay ;  
And The Barb comes away unextended,  
Hard held, like a second Eclipse,  
While behind, the hoof-thunder is blended  
With the whistling and crackling of whips.

### *Epilogue*

He wins ; yes, he wins upon paper,  
He hasn't yet won upon turf,

And these rhymes are but moonshine and vapour,  
Air-bubbles and spume from the surf.  
So be it, at least they are given  
Free, gratis, for just what they 're worth,  
And (whatever there may be in heaven)  
There 's little worth much upon earth.

When, with satellites round them, the centre  
Of all eyes, hard pressed by the crowd,  
The pair, horse and rider, re-enter  
The gate, 'mid a shout long and loud,  
You may feel as you might feel, just landed  
Full length on the grass from a clip  
Of a vicious cross-counter, right-handed,  
Or upper-cut whizzing from hip.

And that 's not so bad if you 're picked up  
Discreetly, and carefully nursed ;  
Loose teeth by the sponge are soon licked up,  
And next time you *may* get home first.  
Still I 'm not sure you 'd like it exactly  
(Such tastes as a rule are acquired),  
And you 'll find in a nutshell this fact lie,  
Bruised optics are not much admired.

Do I bore you with vulgar allusions ?  
Forgive me, I speak as I feel,  
I 've pondered and made my conclusions—  
As the mill grinds the corn to the meal ;  
So man striving boldly but blindly.  
Ground piecemeal in Destiny's mill,  
At his best, taking punishment kindly,  
Is only a chopping-block still.

Are we wise ? Our abstruse calculations  
Are based on experience long ;  
Are we sanguine ? Our high expectations  
Are founded on hope that is strong ;

Thus we build an air-castle that crumbles  
And drifts till no traces remain,  
And the fool builds again while he grumbles,  
And the wise one laughs, building again.

‘How came they to pass these rash blunders,  
These false steps so hard to defend?’  
Our friend puts the question and wonders,  
We laugh and reply, ‘Ah! my friend,  
Could you trace the first stride falsely taken,  
The distance misjudged, where or how,  
When you picked yourself up, stunned and shaken,  
At the fence ’twixt the turf and the plough?’

In the jar of the panel rebounding!  
In the crash of the splintering wood!  
In the ears to the earth shock resounding!  
In the eyes flashing fire and blood!  
In the quarters above you revolving!  
In the sods underneath heaving high!  
There was little to aid you in solving  
Such questions—the how or the why.

And destiny, steadfast in trifles,  
Is steadfast for better or worse  
In great things, it crushes and stifles,  
And swallows the hopes that we nurse.  
Men wiser than we are may wonder,  
When the future they cling to so fast,  
To the roll of that destiny’s thunder,  
Goes down with the wrecks of the past.

. . . . .  
The past! the dead past! that has swallowed  
All the honey of life and the milk,  
Brighter dreams than mere pastimes we’ve followed  
Better things than our scarlet or silk;  
Aye, and worse things—that past is it really  
Dead to us, who again and again



Feel sharply, hear plainly, see clearly  
Past days with their joy and their pain ?

Like corpses embalmed and unburied  
They lie, and in spite of our will,  
Our souls on the wings of thought carried,  
Revisit their sepulchres still ;  
Down the channels of mystery gliding,  
They conjure strange tales, rarely read,  
Of the priests of dead Pharaohs presiding  
At mystical feasts of the dead.

Weird pictures arise, quaint devices,  
Rude emblems, baked funeral meats,  
Strong incense, rare wines, and rich spices,  
The ashes, the shrouds, and the sheets ;  
Does our thralldom fall short of completeness  
For the magic of a charnel-house charm,  
And the flavour of a poisonous sweetness,  
And the odour of a poisonous balm ?

And the links of the past—but, no matter,  
For I 'm getting beyond you, I guess,  
And you 'll call me 'as mad as a hatter'  
If my thoughts I too freely express ;  
I subjoin a quotation, pray learn it,  
And with the aid of your lexicon tell us  
The meaning thereof, '*Res discernit  
Sapiens, quas confundit asellus.*'

Already green hillocks are swelling,  
And combing white locks on the bar,  
Where a dull, droning murmur is telling  
Of winds that have gathered afar ;  
Thus we know not the day nor the morrow,  
Nor yet what the night may bring forth,  
Nor the storm, nor the sleep, nor the sorrow,  
Nor the strife, nor the rest, nor the wrath.

Yet the skies are still tranquil and starlit,  
 The sun 'twixt the wave and the west  
 Dies in purple, and crimson, and scarlet,  
 And gold ; let us hope for the best,  
 Since again from the earth his effulgence  
 The darkness and damp-dews shall wipe,  
 Kind reader, extend your indulgence  
 To this the last lay of ' The Pipe.'

## THE ROLL OF THE KETTLEDRUM ; OR THE LAY OF THE LAST CHARGER

' You have the Pyrrhic dance, as yet,  
 Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone ?  
 Of two such lessons, why forget  
 The nobler and the manlier one ?'—BYRON.

ONE line of swart profiles, and bearded lips dressing,  
 One ridge of bright helmets, one crest of fair plumes,  
 One streak of blue sword-blades all bared for the  
 fleshing,

One row of red nostrils that scent battle-fumes.

Forward ! the trumpets were sounding the charge,  
 The roll of the kettledrum rapidly ran,  
 That music, like wild-fire spreading at large,  
 Maddened the war-horse as well as the man.

Forward ! still forward ! we thundered along,  
 Steadily yet, for our strength we were nursing ;  
 Tall Ewart, our sergeant, was humming a song,  
 Lance-corporal Black Will was blaspheming and  
 cursing.

Opened their volley of guns on our right,  
 Puffs of grey smoke, veiling gleams of red flame,  
 Curling to leeward, were seen on the height  
 Where the batteries were posted, as onward we  
 came.

Spreading before us their cavalry lay,  
 Squadron on squadron, troop upon troop ;  
 We were so few, and so many were they—  
 Eagles wait calmly the sparrow-hawk's stoop.

Forward ! still forward ! steed answering steed  
 Cheerily nighed, while the foam-flakes were tossed  
 From bridle to bridle—the top of our speed  
 Was gained, but the pride of our order was lost.

One was there, leading by nearly a rood,  
 Though we were racing he kept to the fore,  
 Still as a rock in his stirrups he stood,  
 High in the sunlight his sabre he bore.

Suddenly tottering, backwards he crashed,  
 Loudly his helm right in front of us rung ;  
 Iron hoofs thundered, and naked steel flashed  
 Over him—youngest, where many were young.

Now we were close to them, every horse striding  
 Madly ;—St. Luce passed with never a groan ;—  
 Sadly my master looked round—he was riding  
 On the boy's right, with a line of his own.

Thrusting his hand in his breast or breast-pocket,  
 While from his wrist the sword swung by a chain,  
 Swiftly he drew out some trinket or locket,  
 Kissed it (I think) and replaced it again.

Burst, while his fingers reclosed on the haft,  
 Jarring concussion and earth-shaking din,  
 Horse 'countered horse, and I reeled, but he laughed,  
 Down went his man, cloven clean to the chin !

Wedged in the midst of that struggling mass,  
 After the first shock, where each his foe singled,  
 Little was seen, save a dazzle, like glass  
 In the sun, with grey smoke and black dust inter-  
 mingled.

Here and there reddened a pistol-shot, flashing  
Through the red sparkle of steel upon steel !  
Redder the spark seemed, and louder the clashing,  
Struck from the helm by the iron-shod heel !

Over fallen riders, like withered leaves strewing  
Uplands in autumn, we sundered their ranks ;  
Steeds rearing and plunging, men hacking and hewing,  
Fierce grinding of sword-blades, sharp goading of  
flanks.

Short was the crisis of conflict soon over,  
Being too good (I suppose) to last long ;  
Through them we cut, as the scythe cuts the clover,  
Battered and stained we emerged from their throng.

Some of our saddles were emptied, of course ;  
To heaven (or elsewhere) Black Will had been  
carried !

Ned Sullivan mounted Will's riderless horse,  
His mare being hurt, while ten seconds we tarried.

And then we re-formed, and went at them once more,  
And ere they had rightly closed up the old track,  
We broke through the lane we had opened before,  
And as we went forward e'en so we came back.

Our numbers were few, and our loss far from small,  
They could fight, and besides, they were twenty  
to one ;

We were clear of them all when we heard the recall,  
And thus we returned, but my tale is not done.

For the hand of my rider felt strange on my bit,  
He breathed once or twice like one partially choked,  
And swayed in his seat, then I knew he was hit ;—  
He must have bled fast for my withers were soaked,

And scarcely an inch of my housing was dry ;  
I slackened my speed, yet I never quite stopped,

Ere he patted my neck, said, 'Old fellow, good-bye !'  
And dropped off me gently, and lay where he  
dropped !

Ah, me ! after all, they may call us dumb creatures—  
I tried hard to neigh but the sobs took my breath,  
Yet I guessed, gazing down at those still, quiet  
features,  
He was never more happy in life than in death.

Two years back, at Aldershot, Elrington mentioned  
My name to our colonel one field-day. He said,  
'Count,' 'Steeltrap,' and 'Challenger' ought to be  
pensioned ;—  
'Count' died the same week, and now 'Steeltrap'  
is dead.

That morning our colonel was riding 'Theresa,'  
The filly by 'Teddington,' out of 'Mistake' ;  
His girls, pretty Alice and fair-haired Louisa,  
Were there on the ponies he purchased from Blako.

I remember he pointed me out to his daughters,  
Said he, 'In this troop I may fairly take pride,  
But I've none left like him in my officers' quarters,  
Whose life-blood the mane of old "Challenger"  
dyed.'

Where are they ? the war-steeds who shared in our  
glory,

The 'Lanercost' colt, and the 'Acrobat' mare,  
And the Irish division, 'Kate Kearney' and 'Rory,'  
And rushing 'Roscommon,' and eager 'Kildare,'

And 'Freeny,' a favourite once with my master,  
And 'Warlock,' a sluggard, but honest and true,  
And 'Tancred,' as honest as 'Warlock,' but faster,  
And 'Blacklock,' and 'Birdlime,' and 'Molly  
Carew' ?—

All vanished, what wonder ! twelve summers have  
passed

Since then, and my comrade lies buried this day,—  
Old 'Steeltrap,' the kicker,—and now I'm the last  
Of the chargers who shared in that glorious fray.

Come, 'Harlequin,' keep your nose out of my manger,  
You'll get your allowance, my boy, and no more ;  
Snort ! 'Silvertail,' snort ! when you've seen as  
much danger  
As I have, you won't mind the rats in the straw.

Our gallant old colonel came limping and halting,  
The day before yesterday, into my stall ;  
Oh ! light to the saddle I've once seen him vaulting,  
In full marching order, steel broadsword, and all.

And now, his left leg than his right is made shorter  
Three inches, he stoops, and his chest is unsound ;  
He spoke to me gently, and patted my quarter,  
I laid my ears back and looked playfully round.

For that word kindly meant, that caress kindly given,  
I thanked him, though dumb, but my cheerfulness  
fled ;

More sadness I drew from the face of the living  
Than years back I did from the face of the dead.

For the dead face, upturned, tranquil, joyous, and  
fearless,

Looked straight from green sod to blue fathomless sky  
With a smile ; but the living face, gloomy and tearless,  
And haggard and harassed, looked down with a sigh.

Did he think on the first time he kissed Lady Mary ?  
On the morning he winged Horace Greville the  
beau ?

On the winner he steered in the grand military ?  
On the charge that he headed twelve long years ago ?

Did he think on each fresh year, of fresh grief the  
herald ?

On lids that are sunken, and locks that are grey ?  
On Alice, who bolted with Brian Fitzgerald ?

On Rupert, his first-born, dishonoured by ' play ' ?

On Louey, his darling, who sleeps 'neath the cypress,  
That shades her and one whose last breath gave  
her life ?

I saw those strong fingers hard over each eye press—  
Oh ! the dead rest in peace when the quick toil  
in strife !

. . . . .

Scoff, man ! egotistical, proud, unobservant,  
Since I with man's grief dare to sympathise thus ;  
Why scoff ?—fellow-creature I am, fellow-servant  
Of God, can man fathom God's dealings with us ?

The wide gulf that parts us may yet be no wider  
Than that which parts you from some being more  
blest ;  
And there may be more links 'twixt the horse and his  
rider  
Than ever your shallow philosophy guessed.

You are proud of your power, and vain of your courage,  
And your blood, Anglo-Saxon, or Norman, or Celt ;  
Though your gifts you extol, and our gifts you dis-  
parage,  
Your perils, your pleasures, your sorrows we've  
felt.

We, too, sprung from mares of the prophet of Mecca,  
And nursed on the pride that was born with the  
milk,  
And filtered through ' Crucifix,' ' Beeswing,' ' Re-  
becca,'  
We love sheen of scarlet and shimmer of silk.

We, too, sprung from loins of the Ishmaelite stallions,  
We glory in daring that dies or prevails ;  
From counter of squadrons, and crash of battalions,  
To rending of blackthorns, and rattle of rails.

In all strife where courage is tested, and power,  
From the meet on the hillside, the horn-blast, the  
find,  
The burst, the long gallop that seems to devour  
The champaign, all obstacles flinging behind.

To the cheer and the clarion, the war-music blended  
With war-cry, the furious dash at the foe,  
The terrible shock, the recoil, and the splendid  
Bare sword, flashing blue, rising red from the blow.

I've borne *one* through perils where many have seen  
us,  
No tyrant, a kind friend, a patient instructor,  
And I've felt some strange element flashing between us,  
Till the saddle seemed turned to a lightning con-  
ductor.

Did he see ? could he feel through the faintness, the  
numbness,  
While lingered the spirit half-loosed from the clay,  
Dumb eyes seeking his in their piteous dumbness,  
Dumb quivering nostrils, too stricken to neigh ?

And what then ? the colours reversed, the drums  
muffled,  
The black nodding plumes, the dead march, and  
the pall,  
The stern faces, soldier-like, silent, unruffled,  
The slow sacred music that floats over all !

Cross carbine and boarspear, hang bugle and banner,  
Spur, sabre, and snaffle, and helm—Is it well ?  
Vain 'scutcheon, false trophies of Mars and Diana,—  
Can the dead laurel sprout with the live *immortelle* ?



It may be,—we follow, and though we inherit  
 Our strength for a season, our pride for a span,  
 Say ! vanity are they ? vexation of spirit ?  
 Not so, since they serve for a time horse and man.

They serve for a time, and they make life worth living,  
 In spite of life's troubles—'tis vain to despond ;  
 Oh, man ! *we* at least, *we* enjoy, with thanksgiving,  
 God's gifts on this earth, though we look not beyond.

*You* sin, and *you* suffer, and we too find sorrow,  
 Perchance through *your* sin—yet it soon will be  
     o'er ;  
 We labour to-day, and we slumber to-morrow,  
 Strong horse and bold rider !—and *who knoweth*  
     *more ?*

. . . . .

In our barrack-square shouted Drill-sergeant M'Clus-  
     kie,  
 The roll of the kettledrum rapidly ran,  
 The colonel wheeled short, speaking once, dry and  
     husky,  
 ' Would to God I had died with your master, old  
     man.'

## THE ROMANCE OF BRITOMARTE

AS RELATED BY SERGEANT LEIGH ON THE NIGHT  
 HE GOT HIS CAPTAINCY AT THE RESTORATION

I 'LL tell you a story : but pass the ' jack,'  
 And let us make merry to-night, my men.  
 Aye, those were the days when my beard was black—  
 I like to remember them now and then—  
 Then Miles was living, and Cuthbert there  
 On his lip was never a sign of down ;

But I carry about some braided hair,

That has not yet changed from the glossy brown  
That it showed the day when I broke the heart  
Of the bravest of destriers, 'Britomarte.'

Sir Hugh was slain (may his soul find grace ')

In the fray that was neither lost nor won  
At Edgehill—then to St. Hubert's Chase

Lord Goring despatched a garrison—  
But men and horses were ill to spare,

And ere long the soldiers were shifted fast.  
As for me, I never was quartered there

Till Marston Moor had been lost; at last,  
As luck would have it, alone, and late  
In the night, I rode to the northern gate.

I thought, as I passed through the moonlit park,

On the boyish days I used to spend  
In the halls of the knight lying stiff and stark—

Thought on his lady, my father's friend  
(Mine, too, in spite of my sinister bar,

But with that my story has nought to do)—  
She died the winter before the war—

Died giving birth to the baby Hugh.  
He passed ere the green leaves clothed the bough,  
And the orphan girl was the heiress now.

When I was a rude and a reckless boy,

And she a brave and a beautiful child,  
I was her page, her playmate, her toy—

I have crowned her hair with the field-flowers wild,  
Cowslip and crowfoot, and coltsfoot bright—

I have carried her miles when the woods were wet,  
I have read her romances of dame and knight—

She was my princess, my pride, my pet.  
There was then this proverb us twain between,  
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.

She had grown to a maiden wonderful fair,  
 But for years I had scarcely seen her face.  
 Now, with troopers Holdsworth, Huntly and Clare,  
 Old Miles kept guard at St. Hubert's Chase,  
 And the chatelaine was a Mistress Ruth,  
 Sir Hugh's half-sister, an ancient dame,  
 But a mettlesome soul had she forsooth,  
 As she showed when the time of her trial came.  
 I bore despatches to Miles and to her,  
 To warn them against the bands of Kerr.

And mine would have been a perilous ride  
 With the rebel horsemen—we know not where  
 They were scattered over that countryside,—  
 If it had not been for my brave brown mare—  
 She was iron-sinewed and satin-skinned,  
 Ribbed like a drum and limbed like a deer,  
 Fierce as the fire and fleet as the wind—  
 There was nothing she couldn't climb or clear—  
 Rich lords had vexed me, in vain, to part,  
 For their gold and silver, with Britomarte.

Next morn we mustered scarce half a score  
 With the serving-men, who were poorly armed—  
 Five soldiers, counting myself, no more,  
 And a culverin, which might well have harmed  
 Us, had we used it, but not our foes,  
 When, with horses and foot, to our doors they came,  
 And a psalm-singer summoned us (through his nose),  
 And delivered—' This, in the people's name,  
 Unto whose holdeth this fortress here,  
 Surrender ! or bide the siege—John Kerr.'

'Twas a mansion built in a style too new,  
 A castle by courtesy, he lied  
 Who called it a fortress—yet, 'tis true,  
 It had been indifferently fortified—  
 We were well provided with bolt and bar—  
 And while I hurried to place our men,

Old Miles was called to a council of war  
With Mistress Ruth and with *her*, and when  
They had argued loudly and long, those three,  
They sent, as a last resource, for me.

In the chair of state sat erect Dame Ruth ;  
She had cast aside her embroidery :  
She had been a beauty, they say, in her youth,  
There was much fierce fire in her bold black eye.  
' Am I deceived in you both ? ' quoth she,  
' If one spark of her father's spirit lives  
In this girl here—so, this Leigh, Ralph Leigh,  
Let us hear what counsel the springald gives.'  
Then I stammered, somewhat taken aback—  
(Simon, you ale-swiller, pass the ' jack ').

The dame waxed hotter—' Speak out, lad, say,  
Must we fall in that canting cantiff's power ?  
Shall we yield to a knave and a turncoat ? Nay,  
I had lever leap from our topmost tower.  
For a while we can surely await relief :  
Our walls are high and our doors are strong.'  
This Kerr was indeed a canting thief—  
I know not rightly, some private wrong  
He had done Sir Hugh, but I know this much,  
Traitor or turncoat he suffered as such.

Quoth Miles—' Enough ' your will shall be done ;  
Relief may arrive by the merest chance,  
But your house ere dusk will be lost and won ;  
They have got three pieces of ordnance.'  
Then I cried, ' Lord Guy, with four troops of horse,  
Even now is biding at Westbrooke town ;  
If a rider could break through the rebel force,  
He would bring relief ere the sun goes down ;  
Through the postern door could I make one dart  
I could baffle them all upon Britomarte.'

Miles muttered 'Madness !' Dame Ruth looked grave,

Said ' True, though we cannot keep one hour  
The courtyard, no, nor the stables save,

They will have to batter piecemeal the tower,  
And thus——' But suddenly she halted there.

With a shining hand on my shoulder laid,  
Stood Gwendoline. She had left her chair,

And, ' Nay, if it needs must be done,' she said,  
' Ralph Leigh will gladly do it, I ween,  
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.'

I had undertaken a heavier task

For a lighter word. I saddled with care,  
Nor cumbered myself with corselet nor casque  
(Being loth to burden the brave brown mare).

Young Clare kept watch on the wall—he cried,  
' Now, haste, Ralph ! this is the time to seize,  
The rebels are round us on every side,

But here they straggle by twos and threes.'  
Then out I led her, and up I sprung,  
And the postern door on its hinges swung.

I had drawn this sword—you may draw it and feel,

For this is the blade that I bore that day—  
There's a notch even now on the long grey steel,  
A nick that has never been rasped away.

I bowed my head and I buried my spurs,  
One bound brought the gliding green beneath ;  
I could tell by her back-flung flattened ears

She had fairly taken the bit in her teeth—  
(What, Jack, have you drained your namesake dry,  
Left nothing to quench the thirst of a fly ?)

These things are done, and are done with, lad,

In far less time than your talker tells.  
The sward with their hoof-strokes shook like mad,  
And rang with their carbines and petronels ;

And they shouted, 'Cross him and cut him off,'  
'Surround him,' 'Seize him,' 'Capture the clown,  
Or kill him,' 'Shall he escape to scoff

In your faces?' 'Shoot him or cut him down.'  
And their bullets whistled on every side:  
Many were near us and more were wide.

Not a bullet told upon Britomarte—

Suddenly snorting, she launched along—  
So the osprey dives where the seagulls dart,  
So the falcon swoops where the kestrels throng;  
And full in my front one pistol flashed,  
And right in my path their sergeant got.  
How our jackboots jarred, how our stirrups clashed,  
While the mare like a meteor past him shot;  
But I clove his skull with a backstroke clean,  
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.

And as one whom the fierce wind storms in the face

With spikes of hail and with splinters of rain,  
I, while we fled through St. Hubert's Chase,  
Bent till my cheek was amongst her mane.  
To the north full a league of the deer-park lay,  
Smooth springy turf, and she fairly flew,  
And the sound of their hoof-strokes died away,  
And their far shots faint in the distance grew.  
Loudly I laughed, having won the start,  
At the folly of following Britomarte.

They had posted a guard at the northern gate—

Some dozen of pikemen and musketeers.  
To the tall park palings I turned her straight,  
She veered in her flight as the swallow veers—  
And some blew matches and some drew swords,  
And one of them wildly hurled his pike,  
But she cleared by inches the oaken boards,  
And she carried me yards beyond the dyke;  
Then gaily over the long green down  
We galloped, heading for Westbrooke town.

The green down slopes to the great grey moor,  
The grey moor sinks to the gleaming Skelt—  
Sudden and sullen, and swift and sure,  
The whirling water was round my belt—  
She breasted the bank with a savage snort  
And a backward glance of her bloodshot eye,  
And 'Our Lady of Andover's' flashed like thought,  
And flitted St. Agatha's nunnery,  
And the firs at The Ferngrove fled on the right,  
And 'Falconer's Tower' on the left took flight.

And over the 'Ravenswold' we raced—  
We rounded the hill by 'The Hermit's Well'—  
We burst on the Westbrooke Bridge—'What haste?  
What errand?' shouted the sentinel.  
'To Beelzebub with the Brewer's knave,'  
'*Carolus Rex* and he of the Rhine,'  
Galloping past him, I got and gave  
In the gallop password and countersign,  
All soaked with water and soiled with mud,  
With the sleeve of my jerkin half drenched in blood.

Now, Heaven be praised that I found him there—  
Lord Guy—he said, having heard my tale,  
'Leigh, let my own man look to your mare,  
Rest and recruit with our wine and ale;  
But first must our surgeon attend to you;  
You are somewhat shrewdly stricken no doubt.'  
Then he snatched a horn from the wall and blew,  
Making 'Boot and Saddle' ring sharply out.  
'Have I done good service this day?' quoth I.  
'Then I will ride back in your troop, Lord Guy.'

In the street I heard how the trumpets pealed,  
And I caught the gleam of a morion  
From the window—then to the door I reeled;  
I had lost more blood than I reckoned upon;  
He eyed me calmly with keen grey eyes—  
Stern grey eyes of a steel blue-grey—

Said, 'The wilful man can never be wise,  
Nathless the wilful must have his way,'  
And he poured from a flagon some fiery wine,  
I drained it and straightway strength was mine.

. . . . .

I was with them all the way on the brown—  
'Guy to the rescue!' 'God and the king!'  
We were just in time, for the doors were down;  
And didn't our sword-blades rasp and ring,  
And didn't we hew and didn't we hack;  
The sport scarce lasted minutes ten—  
(Aye, those were the days when my beard was black;  
I like to remember them now and then),  
Though they fought like fiends, we were four to one,  
And we captured those that refused to run.

We have not forgotten it, Cuthbert, boy!  
That supper scene when the lamps were lit;  
How the women (some of them) sobbed for joy,  
How the soldiers drank the deeper for it;  
How the Dame did honours, and Gwendoline,  
How grandly she glided into the hall,  
How she stooped with the grace of a girlish queen,  
And kissed me gravely before them all;  
And the stern Lord Guy, how gaily he laughed,  
Till more of his cup was spilt than quaffed.

Brown Britomarte lay dead in her straw  
Next morn—we burned her—brave old girl!  
John Kerr, we tried him by martial law,  
And we twisted some hemp for the traitorous churl;  
And she, I met her alone, said she,  
'You have risked your life, you have lost your  
mare,  
And what can I give in return, Ralph Leigh?'  
I replied, 'One braid of that bright brown hair.'  
And with that she bowed her beautiful head,  
You can take as much as you choose,' she said.



And I took it, it may be, more than enough—  
 And I shore it rudely, close to the roots.  
 The wine or wounds may have made me rough,  
 And men at the bottom are merely brutes.  
 Three weeks I slept at St. Hubert's Chase ;  
 When I woke from the fever of wounds and wine,  
 I could scarce believe that the ghastly face  
 That the glass reflected was really mine.  
 I sought the hall—where a wedding *had been*—  
 The wedding of Guy and of Gwendoline.

The romance of a grizzled old trooper's life  
 May make you laugh in your sleeves : laugh out,  
 Lads ; we have most of us seen some strife ;  
 We have all of us had some sport, no doubt.  
 I have won some honour and gained some gold,  
 Now that our king returns to his own ;  
 If the pulses beat slow, if the blood runs cold,  
 And if friends have faded and loves have flown,  
 Then the greater reason is ours to drink,  
 And the more we swallow the less we shall think.

At the battle of Naseby, Miles was slain,  
 And Huntly sank from his wounds that week ;  
 We left young Clare upon Worcester plain—  
 How the ' nonside ' gashed his girlish cheek  
 Aye, strut, and swagger, and ruffle anew,  
 Gay gallants, now that the war is done !  
 They fought like fiends (give the fiend his due)—  
 We fought like fops. it was thus they won.  
 Holdsworth is living for aught I know,  
 At least he was living two years ago.

And Guy—Lord Guy—so stately and stern,  
 He is changed, I met him at Winchester ;  
 He has grown quite gloomy and taciturn.  
 Gwendoline !—why do you ask for her ?  
 Died, as her mother had died before—  
 Died giving birth to the baby Guy !

Did my voice shake ? Then am I fool the more.

Sooner or later we all must die :

But at least let us live while we live to-night.

The *days* may be dark, but the *lamps* are bright.

For to me the sunlight seems worn and wan :

The sun, he is losing his splendour now—

He can never shine as of old he shone

On her glorious hair and glittering brow.

Ah ! those *days that were*, when my beard was black,

Now I have only the *nights that are*.

What, landlord, ho ! bring in haste burnt sack,

And a flask of your fiercest usquebaugh.

You, Cuthbert ! surely you know by heart

The story of *her* and of Britomarte.

## THE LAST LEAP

ALL is over ! fleet career,

Dash of greyhound slipping thongs,

Flight of falcon, bound of deer,

Mad hoof-thunder in our rear,

Cold air rushing up our lungs,

Din of many tongues.

Once again, one struggle good,

One vain effort ;—he must dwell

Near the shifted post, that stood

Where the splinters of the wood,

Lying in the torn tracks, tell

How he struck and fell.

Crest where cold drops beaded cling.

Small ear drooping, nostril full

Glazing to a scarlet ring,



TOM OLIVER ON BIRMINGHAM

*Reproduced by permission of Miss Shepherd of the Storl Hotel, Birmingham, from the oil painting which hangs there.*

A DEDICATION<sup>1</sup>

TO THE AUTHOR OF 'HOLMBY HOUSE'

THEY are rhymes rudely strung with intent less  
Of sound than of words,  
In lands where bright blossoms are scentless,  
And songless bright birds ;  
Where, with fire and fierce drought on her tresses,  
Insatiable Summer oppresses  
Sere woodlands and sad wildernesses,  
And faint flocks and herds.

Where in dreariest days, when all dews end,  
And all winds are warm,  
Wild Winter's large flood-gates are loosened,  
And floods, freed by storm  
From broken-up fountain-heads, dash on  
Dry deserts with long pent-up passion—  
Here rhyme was first framed without fashion,  
Song shaped without form.

Whence gathered ?—The locust's glad chirrup  
May furnish a stave ;  
The ring of a rowel and stirrup,  
The wash of a wave.  
The chaunt of the marsh-frog in rushes,  
That chimes through the pauses and hushes  
Of nightfall, the torrent that gushes,  
The tempests that rave.

In the deepening of dawn, when it dapples  
The dusk of the sky,  
With streaks like the reddening of apples,  
The ripening of rye.

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<sup>1</sup> Major Whyte-Melville, the novelist.

To eastward, when cluster by cluster,  
Dim stars and dull planets, that muster,  
Wax wan in a world of white lustre  
That spreads far and high.

In the gathering of night-gloom o'erhead, in  
The still silent change,  
All fire-flushed when forest trees redden  
On slopes of the range.  
When the gnarled, knotted trunks Eucalyptian  
Seem carved, like weird columns Egyptian,  
With curious device—quaint inscription,  
And hieroglyph strange.

In the Spring, when the wattle-gold trembles  
'Twixt shadow and shine,  
When each dew-laden air draught resembles  
A long draught of wine ;  
When the sky-line's blue burnished resistance  
Makes deeper the dreamiest distance,  
Some song in all hearts hath existence,—  
Such songs have been mine.

They came in all guises, some vivid  
To clasp and to keep ;  
Some sudden and swift as the livid  
Blue thunder-flame's leap.  
This swept through the first breath of clover  
With memories renewed to the rover—  
That flashed while the black horse turned over  
Before the long sleep.

To you (having cunning to colour  
A page with your pen,  
That through dull days, and nights even duller,  
Long years ago ten ;  
Fair pictures in fever afforded)—  
I send these rude staves, roughly worded  
By one in whose brain stands recorded  
As clear now as then.

' The great rush of grey " Northern water,"  
    The green ridge of bank,  
The " sorrel " with curved sweep of quarter  
    Curled close to clean flank,  
The Royalist saddlefast squarely,  
And, where the bright uplands stretch fairly,  
Behind, beyond pistol-shot barely,  
    The Roundheaded rank

' A long launch, with clinging of muscles,  
    And clenching of teeth !  
The loose doublet ripples and rustles '  
    The swirl shoots beneath !'  
Enough. In return for your garland—  
In lieu of the flowers from your far land—  
Take wild growth of dreamland or starland,  
    Take weeds for your wreath.

Yet rhyme had not failed me for reason,  
    Nor reason for rhyme ;  
Sweet Song ! had I sought you in season,  
    And found you in time.  
You beckon in your bright beauty yonder,  
And I, waxing fainter, yet fonder,  
Now weary too soon when I wander—  
    Now fall when I climb.

It matters but little in the long run,  
    The weak have some right—  
Some share in the race that the strong run,  
    The fight the strong fight.  
If words that are worthless go westward,  
Yet the worst word shall be as the best word,  
In the day when all riot sweeps restward,  
    In darkness or light.

## Part II

*Poems Swinburnian in Form and Pessimism,  
but full of the Personality of Gordon*

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### DOUBTFUL DREAMS<sup>1</sup>

AYE, snows are rife in December,  
And sheaves are in August yet,  
And you would have me remember,  
And I would rather forget ;  
In the bloom of the May-day weather.  
In the blight of October chill,  
We were dreamers of old together,—  
As of old, are you dreaming still ?

For nothing on earth is sadder  
Than the dream that cheated the grasp.  
The flower that turned to the adder,  
The fruit that changed to the asp ;  
When the day-spring in darkness closes,  
As the sunset fades from the hills,  
With the fragrance of perished roses,  
With the music of parched-up rills.

When the sands on the seashore nourish  
Red clover and yellow corn ;  
When figs on the thistle flourish,  
And grapes grow thick on the thorn ;

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<sup>1</sup> Published in the *Colonial Monthly*, December 1868

When the dead branch, blighted and blasted,  
Puts forth green leaves in the spring ;  
Then the dream that life has outlasted,  
Dead comfort to life may bring.

I have changed the soil and the season,  
But whether skies freeze or flame,  
The soil they flame on or freeze on  
Is changed in little save name ;  
The loadstone points to the nor'ward.  
The river runs to the sea ;  
And you would have me look forward.  
And backward I fain would flee.

I remember the bright spring garlands,  
The gold that spangled the green,  
And the purple on fairy far lands,  
And the white and the red bloom, seen  
From the spot where we last lay dreaming  
Together—yourself and I—  
The soft grass beneath us gleaming,  
Above us the great grave sky.

And we spoke thus, ' Though we have trodden  
Rough paths in our boyish years ;  
And some with our sweat are sodden,  
And some are salt with our tears ;  
Though we stumble still, walking blindly,  
Our paths shall be made all straight ;  
We are weak, but the heavens are kindly,  
The skies are compassionate '

Is the clime of the old land younger,  
Where the young dreams longer are nursed ?  
With the old insatiable hunger,  
With the old unquenchable thirst,  
Are you longing, as in the old years  
We have longed so often in vain ;  
Fellow-toilers still, fellow-soldiers,  
Though the seas have sundered us twain ?



But the young dreams surely have faded,  
Young dreams !—old dreams of young days—  
Shall the new dream vex us as they did ?  
Or as things worth censure or praise ?  
Real toil is ours, real trouble,  
Dim dreams of pleasure and pride ;  
Let the dreams disperse like a bubble,  
So the toil like a dream subside.

Vain toil ! men better and braver,  
Rose early and rested late,  
Whose burdens than ours were graver,  
And sterner than ours their hate.  
What fair reward had Achilles ?  
What rest could Alcides win ?  
Vain toil ! ‘ Consider the likes,  
They toil not, neither do spin.’

Nor for mortal toiling nor spinning  
Will the matters of mortals mend ;  
As it was so in the beginning  
It shall be so in the end.  
The web that the weavers weave ill  
Shall not be woven aright,  
Till the good is brought forth from evil,  
As day is brought forth from night.

Vain dreams ! for our fathers cherished  
High hopes in the days that were ;  
And these men wondered and perished,  
Nor better than these we fare ;  
And our due at least is their due,  
They fought against odds and fell ;  
*En avant les enfants perdus !*  
We fight against odds as well.

The skies ! Will the great skies care for  
Our footsteps, straighten our path,  
Or strengthen our weakness ? Wherefore ?  
We have rather incurred their wrath ;

When against the Captain of Hazor  
The stars in their courses fought,  
Did the sky shed merciful rays, or  
With love was the sunshine fraught ?

Can they favour man ? Can they wrong man ?  
The unapproachable skies ?  
Though these gave strength to the strong man,  
And wisdom gave to the wise ?  
When strength is turned to derision,  
And wisdom brought to dismay,  
Shall we wake from a troubled vision,  
Or rest from a toilsome day ?

Nay ! I cannot tell. Peradventure  
Our very toil is a dream,  
And the works that we praise or censure  
It may be, they only seem.  
If so, I would fain awaken  
Or sleep more soundly than so,  
Or by dreamless sleep overtaken  
The dream I would fain forego.

For the great things of earth are small things,  
The longest life is a span,  
And there is an end to all things,  
A season to every man,  
Whose glory is dust and ashes,  
Whose spirit is but a spark,  
That out from the darkness flashes,  
And flickers out in the dark.

We remember the pangs that wrung us  
When some went down to the pit,  
Who faded as leaves among us,  
Who flitted as shadows fit ;  
What visions under the stone lie ?  
What dreams in the shroud sleep dwell ?  
For we saw the earth-pit only,  
And we heard only the knell.

We know not whether they slumber  
 Who waken on earth no more,  
 As the stars of the heights in number,  
 As sands on the deep seashore.  
 Shall stiffness bind them, and starkness  
 Enthral them, by field and flood,  
 Till ' the sun shall be turned to darkness,  
 And the moon shall be turned to blood ' ?

We know not '—worse may enthrall men—  
 ' The wages of sin is death ' ;  
 And so death passed upon all men,  
 For sin was born with man's breath.  
 Then the labourer spent with sinning,  
 His hire with his life shall spend ;  
 For it was so in the beginning,  
 And shall be so in the end.

There is life in the blackened ember  
 While a spark is smouldering yet ;  
 In a dream e'en now I remember  
 That dream I had lief forget—  
 I had hef forget, I had e'en hef  
 That dream with *this* doubt should die—  
 ' *If we did these things in the green leaf,*  
*What shall be done in the dry ?* '

## DE TE

A BURNING glass of burnished brass,  
 The calm sea caught the noontide rays,  
 And sunny slopes of golden grass  
 And wastes of weed-flower seem to blaze.  
 Beyond the shining silver-greys,  
 Beyond the shades of denser bloom,  
 The skyline girt with glowing haze  
 The farthest, faintest forest gloom,  
 And the everlasting hills that loom.

We heard the hound beneath the mound,  
We scared the swamp hawk hovering nigh—  
We had not sought for that we found—  
He lay as dead men only he,  
With wan cheek whitening in the sky,  
Through the wild heath flowers, white and red.  
The dumb brute that had seen him die,  
Close crouching, howled beside the head,  
Brute burial service o'er the dead.

The brow was rife with seams of strife—  
A lawless death made doubly plain  
The ravage of a reckless life ;  
The havoc of a hurricane  
Of passions through that breadth of brain,  
Like headlong horses that had run  
Riot, regardless of the rein—  
'Madman, he might have lived and done  
Better than most men,' whispered one.

The beams and blots that Heaven allots  
To every life with life begin.  
Fool ! would you change the leopard's spots,  
Or blanch the Ethiopian's skin ?  
What more could he have hoped to win,  
What better things have thought to gain,  
So shapen—so conceived in sin ?  
No life is wholly void and vain,  
Just and unjust share sun and rain.

Were new life sent and life misspent  
Wiped out (if such to God seemed good),  
Would he (being as he was) repent,  
Or could he, even if he would,  
Who heeded not things understood  
(Though dimly) even in savage lands  
By some who worship stone or wood,  
Or bird or beast, or who stretch hands  
Sunward on shining Eastern sands ?

And crime has cause. Nay, never pause  
 Idly to feel a pulseless wrist ;  
 Brace up the massive square-shaped jaws,  
 Unclench the stubborn, stiffening fist,  
 And close those eyes through film and mist,  
 That kept the old defiant glare ;  
 And answer, wise Psychologist,  
 Whose science claims some little share  
 Of truth, what better things lay there ?

Aye ! thought and mind were there,—some kind  
 Of faculty that men mistake  
 For talent when their wits are blind,—  
 An aptitude to mar and break  
 What others diligently make.  
 This was the worst and best of him—  
 Wise with the cunning of the snake,  
 Brave with the she-wolf's courage grim,  
 Dying hard and dumb, torn limb from limb.

And you, Brown, you 're a doctor ; cure  
 You can't, but you can kill, and he—  
 ' *Witness his mark* '—he signed last year,  
 And now he signs John Smith, J.P.  
 We 'll hold our inquest *now*, we three ;  
 I 'll be your coroner for once ;  
 I think old Oswald ought to be  
 Our foreman—Jones is such a dunce,—  
 There 's more brain in the bloodhound's scone.

No man may shirk the allotted work,  
 The deed to do, the death to die ;  
 At least I think so,—neither Turk,  
 Nor Jew, nor infidel am I,—  
 And yet I wonder when I try  
 To solve one question, may or must,  
 And shall I solve it by and by,  
 Beyond the dark, beneath the dust ?  
 I trust so, and I only trust.

Aye what they will, such trifles kill.  
 Comrade, for one good deed of yours,  
 Your history shall not help to fill  
 The mouths of many brainless boors.  
 It may be death absolves or cures  
 The sin of life. 'Twere hazardous  
 To assert so. If the sin endures,  
 Say only, ' God who has judged him thus,  
 Be merciful to him, and us.'

## THE RHYME OF JOYOUS GARDE

THROUGH the lattice rushes the south wind, dense  
 With fumes of the flowery frankincense  
 From hawthorn blossoming thickly ;  
 And gold is showered on grass unshorn,  
 And poppy-fire on shuddering corn,  
 With May-dew flooded and flushed with morn,  
 And scented with sweetness sickly.

The bloom and brilliance of summer days,  
 The buds that brighten, the fields that blaze,  
 The fruits that ripen and redden,  
 And all the gifts of a God-sent light  
 Are sadder things in my shameful sight  
 Than the blackest gloom of the bitterest night,  
 When the senses darken and deaden.

For the days recall what the nights efface,  
 Scenes of glory and seasons of grace,  
 For which there is no returning—  
 Else the days were even as the nights to me,  
 Now the axe is laid to the root of the tree,  
 And to-morrow the barren trunk may be  
 Cut down—cast forth for the burning.

Would God I had died the death that day  
When the bishop blessed us before the fray  
    At the shrine of the Saviour's Mother ;  
We buckled the spur, we braced the belt,  
Arthur and I—together we knelt,  
And the grasp of his kingly hand I felt  
    As the grasp of an only brother.

The body and the blood of Christ we shared,  
Knees bended and heads bowed down and bared,  
    We listened throughout the praying.  
Eftsoon the shock of the foe we bore  
Shoulder to shoulder on Severn's shore,  
Till our hilts were glued to our hands with gore,  
    And our sinews slackened with slaying

Was I far from Thy Kingdom, gracious Lord,  
With a shattered casque and a shivered sword,  
    On the threshold of Mary's chapel ?  
Pardie ! I had wellnigh won that crown  
Which endureth more than a knight's renown,  
When the pagan giant had got me down  
    Sore spent in the deadly grapple.

May his craven spirit find little grace,  
He was sealed to Satan in any case,  
    Yet the loser had been the winner ;  
Had I waxed fainter or he less faint,  
Then my soul was free from this loathsome taint,  
I had died as a Christian knight—no saint  
    Perchance, yet a pardoned sinner.

But I strove full grimly beneath his weight,  
I clung to his poignard desperate,  
    I baffled the thrust that followed,  
And writhing uppermost rose, to deal,  
With bare three inches of broken steel,  
One stroke—Ha ! the headpiece crashed piecemeal,  
    And the knave in his black blood wallowed.

So I lived for worse—in fulness of time,  
 When peace for a season swayed the clime,  
     And spears for a space were idle ;  
 Trusted and chosen of all the court,  
 A favoured herald of fair report,  
 I travelled eastward, and duly brought  
     A bride to a queenly bridal.

Pardie ! 'twas a morning even as this  
 (The skies were warmer if aught, I wis,  
     Albert the fields were duller ;  
 Or it may be that the envious spring,  
 Abashed at the sight of a fairer thing,  
 Waxed somewhat sadder of colouring  
     Because of her faultless colour).

With her through the Lyonesse I rode,  
 Till the woods with the noontide fervour glowed,  
     And there for a space we halted,  
 Where the intertwining branches made  
 Cool carpets of olive-tinted shade,  
 And the floors with fretwork of flame inlaid  
     From leafy lattices vaulted.

And scarf and mantle for her I spread,  
 And strewed them over the grassiest bed  
     And under the greenest awning,  
 And loosened latch and buckle, and freed  
 From selle and housing the red roan steed,  
 And the jennet of swift Iberian breed,  
     That had carried us since the dawning.

The brown thrush sang through the briar and bower,  
 All flushed or frosted with forest flower  
     In the warm sun's wanton glances :  
 And I grew deaf to the song-bird—blind  
 To blossom that sweetened the sweet spring wind—  
 I saw her only—a girl reclined  
     In her girlhood's indolent trances.



And the song and the scent and sense waxed weak,  
The wild rose withered beside the cheek  
    She poised on her fingers slender ;  
The soft spun gold of her glittering hair  
Ran rippling into a wondrous snare,  
That flooded the round arm bright and bare  
    And the shoulder's silvery splendour.

The deep dusk fires in those dreamy eyes,  
Like seas clear-coloured in summer skies,  
    Were guiltless of future treason ;  
And I stood watching her still and mute,  
Yet the evil seed in my soul found root,  
And the sad plant throve, and the sinful fruit  
    Grew ripe in the shameful season.

Let the sin be mine as the shame was hers,  
In desolate days of departed years  
    She had leisure for shame and sorrow—  
There was light repentance and brief remorse,  
When I rode against Saxon foes or Norse  
With clang of harness and clatter of horse,  
    And little heed for the morrow.

And now she is dead, men tell me, and I,  
In this living death must I linger and lie  
    Till my cup to the dregs is drunken ?  
I looked through the lattice, worn and grim,  
With eyelids darkened and eyesight dim,  
And weary body and wasted limb,  
    And sinew slackened and shrunken.

She is dead ! Gone down to the burial-place  
Where the grave-dews cleave to her faultless face ;  
    Where the grave-sods crumble around her ;  
And that bright burden of burnished gold,  
That once on those waxen shoulders rolled,  
Will it spoil with the damps of the deadly mould,  
    Was it shorn when the church vows bound her ?

Now I know full well that the fair spear-shaft  
 Shall never gladden my hand, nor the haft  
     Of the good sword grow to my fingers ;  
 Now the maddest fray, the merriest din,  
 Would fail to quicken this life-stream thin,  
 Yet the sleepy poison of that sweet sin  
     In the sluggish current still lingers.

Would God I had slept with the slain men, long  
 Or ever the heart conceived a wrong  
     That the innermost soul abhorred—  
 Or ever these lying lips were strained  
 To her lids, pearl-tinted and purple-veined,  
 Or ever those traitorous kisses stained  
     The snows of her spotless forehead.

Let me gather a little strength to think,  
 As one who reels on the outermost brink,  
     To the innermost gulf descending.  
 In that truce the longest and last of all,  
 In the summer nights of that festival—  
 Soft vesture of samite and silken pall—  
     The beginning came of the ending.

And one trod softly with sandalled feet—  
 Ah ! why are the stolen waters sweet ?—  
     And one crept stealthily after ;  
 I would I had taken him there and wrung  
 His knavish neck when the dark door swung,  
 Or torn by the roots his treacherous tongue,  
     And stifled his hateful laughter.

So the smouldering scandal blazed—but he,  
 My king, to the last put trust in me—  
     Aye, well was his trust requited !  
 Now priests may patter, and bells may toll,  
 He will need no masses to aid his soul ;  
 When the angels open the judgment scroll,  
     His wrong will be tenfold righted.

Then dawned the day when the mail was donned,  
And the steed for the strife caparisoned,  
    But not 'gainst the Norse invader.  
Then was bloodshed—not by untoward chance,  
As the blood that is drawn by the jousting lance.  
The fray in the castle of Melegrance,  
    The fight in the lists with Mador.

Then the guilt made manifest, then the siege,  
When the true men rallying round the hege  
    Beleaguered his base betrayer ;  
Then the fruitless parleys, the pleadings vain,  
And the hard-fought battles with brave Gawaine.  
Twice worsted, and once so nearly slain,  
    I may well be counted his slayer.

Then the crime of Modred—a little sin  
At the side of mine, though the knave was kin  
    To the king by the knave's hand stricken.  
And the once loved knight, was he there to save  
That knightly king who that knighthood gave ?  
Ah, Christ ! will he greet me as knight or knave  
    In the day when the dust shall quicken ?

Had he lightly loved, had he trusted less,  
I had sinned perchance with the sinfulness  
    That through prayer and penance is pardoned.  
Oh, love most loyal ! Oh, faith most sure !  
In the purity of a soul so pure  
I found my safeguard—I sinned secure,  
    Till my heart to the sin grew hardened.

We were glad together in gladsome meads,  
When they shook to the strokes of our snorting steeds ;  
    We were joyful in joyous lustre  
When it flushed the coppice or filled the glade,  
Where the horn of the Dane or the Saxon brayed,  
And we saw the heathen banner displayed,  
    And the heathen lances cluster.

Then a steel-shod rush and a steel-clad ring,  
 And a crash of the spear-staves splintering,  
     And the billowy battle blended.  
 Riot of chargers, revel of blows,  
 And fierce flushed faces of fighting foes,  
 From croup to bridle, that reeled and rose,  
     In a sparkle of sword-play splendid.

And the long, lithe sword in the hand became  
 As a leaping light, as a falling flame,  
     As a fire through the flax that hasted ;  
 Slender, and shining, and beautiful,  
 How it shone through shivering casque and skull,  
 And never a stroke was void and null,  
     And never a thrust was wasted.

I have done for ever with all these things—  
 Deeds that were joyous to knights and kings,  
     In days that with songs were cherished.  
 The songs are ended, the deeds are done,  
 There shall none of them gladden me now, not one ;  
 There is nothing good for me under the sun,  
     But to perish as these things perished.

Shall it profit me aught that the bishop seeks  
 My presence daily, and duly speaks  
     Soft words of comfort and kindness ?  
 Shall it aught avail me ? ‘ Certes,’ he said,  
 ‘ Though thy soul is darkened, be not afraid—  
 God hateth nothing that He hath made—  
     His light shall disperse thy blindness.’

I am not afraid for myself, although  
 I know I have had that light, and I know  
     The greater my condemnation.  
 When I wellnigh swooned in the deep-drawn bliss  
 Of that first long, sweet, slow, stolen kiss,  
 I would gladly have given for less than this  
     Myself, with my soul’s salvation.

I would languish thus in some loathsome den,  
As a thing of naught in the eyes of men,

    In the mouths of men as a byword.  
Through years of pain, and when God saw fit,  
Singing His praises my soul should fit  
To the darkest depth of the nethermost pit,  
    If *hers* could be wafted skyward.

Lord Christ ! have patience a little while,  
I have sinned because I am utterly vile,  
    Having light, loving darkness rather.  
And I pray Thee deal with me as Thou wilt,  
Yet the blood of Thy foes I have freely spilt,  
And, moreover, mine is the greater guilt  
    In the sight of Thee and Thy Father.

That saint, Thy servant, was counted dear  
Whose sword in the garden grazed the ear  
    Of Thine enemy, Lord Redeemer !  
Not thus on the shattering visor jarred  
In this hand the iron of the hilt crossbarred,  
When the blade was swallowed up to the guard  
    Through the teeth of the strong blasphemer.

If ever I smote as a man should smite,  
If I struck one stroke that seemed good in Thy sight,  
    By Thy loving mercy prevailing,  
Lord ! let her stand in the light of Thy face,  
Clothed with Thy love and crowned with Thy grace.  
When I gnash my teeth in the terrible place  
    That is filled with weeping and wailing.

Shall I comfort my soul on account of this ?  
In the world to come, whatsoever it is,  
    There is no more earthly ill-doing—  
For the dusty darkness shall slay desire,  
And the chaff may burn with unquenchable fire,  
But for green wild growth of thistle and briar,  
    At least there is no renewing.

And this grievous burden of life shall change  
In the dim hereafter, dreamy and strange,  
    And sorrows and joys diurnal.  
And partial blessings and perishing ills  
Shall fade in the praise, or the pang that fills  
The glory of God's eternal hills,  
    Or the gloom of His gulf eternal.

Yet if all things change to the glory of One  
Who for all ill-doers gave His Own sweet Son,  
    To His goodness so shall He change ill,  
When the world as a withered leaf shall be,  
And the sky like a shrivelled scroll shall flee,  
And souls shall be summoned from land and sea,  
    At the blast of His bright archangel.

## THE SONG OF THE SURF

WHITE steeds of ocean, that leap with a hollow and  
    wearisome roar  
On the bar of ironstone steep, not a fathom's length  
    from the shore,  
Is there never a seer nor sophist can interpret your  
    wild refrain,  
When speech the harshest and roughest is seldom  
    studied in vain ?  
My ears are constantly smitten by that dreary  
    monotone,  
In a hieroglyphic 'tis written—'tis spoken in a tongue  
    unknown ;  
Gathering, growing, and swelling, and surging, and  
    shivering, say !  
What is the tale you are telling ? What is the drift  
    of your lay ?

You come, and your crests are hoary with the foam  
of your countless years ;  
You break, with a rainbow of glory, through the  
spray of your glittering tears.  
Is your song a song of gladness ? a pæan of joyous  
might ?  
Or a wail of discordant sadness for the wrongs you  
never can right ?  
For the empty seat by the ingle ? for children reft  
of their sire ?  
For the bride sitting sad, and single, and pale, by  
the flickering fire ?  
For your ravenous pools of suction ? for your shat-  
tering billow swell ?  
For your ceaseless work of destruction ? for your  
hunger insatiable ?  
Not far from this very place, on the sand and the  
shingle dry,  
He lay, with his battered face upturned to the frown-  
ing sky.  
When your waters washed and swilled high over his  
drowning head,  
When his nostrils and lungs were filled, when his feet  
and hands were as lead,  
When against the rock he was hurled, and sucked  
again to the sea,  
On the shores of another world, on the brink of  
eternity,  
On the verge of annihilation, did it come to that  
swimmer strong,  
The sudden interpretation of your mystical, weird-  
like song ?  
'Mortal ! that which thou askest, ask not thou of  
the waves ;  
Fool ! thou foolishly taskest us—we are only slaves ;  
Might, more mighty, impels us—we must our lot fulfil,  
He who gathers and swells us curbs us too at His will.

Think'st thou the wave that shatters questioneth  
His decree ?  
Little to us it matters, and naught it matters to thee.  
Not thus, murmuring idly, we from our duty would  
swerve,  
Over the world spread widely ever we labour and  
serve.'

## THE SWIMMER

WITH short, sharp, violent lights made vivid,  
To southward far as the sight can roam ;  
Only the swirl of the surges livid,  
The seas that climb and the surfs that comb.  
Only the crag and the cliff to nor'ward,  
And the rocks receding, and reefs flung forward,  
And waifs wrecked seaward and wasted shore-  
ward  
On shallows sheeted with flaming foam.

A grim grey coast and a seaboard ghastly,  
And shores trod seldom by feet of men—  
Where the battered hull and the broken mast lie,  
They have lain embedded these long years ten.  
Love ! when we wandered here together,  
Hand in hand through the sparkling weather,  
From the heights and hollows of fern and heather,  
God surely loved us a little then.

Then skies were fairer and shores were firmer—  
The blue sea over the bright sand rolled ;  
Babble and prattle, and ripple and murmur,  
Sheen of silver and glamour of gold—  
And the sunset bathed in the gulf to lend her  
A garland of pinks and of purples tender,  
A tinge of the sun-god's rosy splendour,  
A tithe of his glories manifold.



Man's works are graven, cunning, and skilful  
On earth, where his tabernacles are ;  
But the sea is wanton, the sea is wilful,  
And who shall mend her and who shall mar ?  
Shall we carve success or record disaster  
On the bosom of her heaving alabaster ?  
Will her purple pulse beat fainter or faster  
For fallen sparrow or fallen star ?

I would that with sleepy soft embraces  
The sea would fold me—would find me rest  
In luminous shades of her secret places,  
In depths where her marvels are manifest ;  
So the earth beneath her should not discover  
My hidden couch—nor the heaven above her—  
As a strong love shielding a weary lover,  
I would have her shield me with shining breast.

When light in the realms of space lay hidden,  
When life was yet in the womb of time,  
Ere flesh was fettered to fruits forbidden,  
And souls were wedded to care and crime,  
Was the course foreshaped for the future spirit—  
A burden of folly, a void of merit—  
That would fain the wisdom of stars inherit,  
And cannot fathom the seas sublime ?

Under the sea or the soil (what matter ?  
The sea and the soil are under the sun),  
As in the former days in the latter  
The sleeping or waking is known of none.  
Surely the sleeper shall not awaken  
To griefs forgotten or joys forsaken,  
For the price of all things given and taken,  
The sum of all things done and undone.

Shall we count offences or coin excuses,  
Or weigh with scales the soul of a man.  
Whom a strong hand binds and a sure hand looses,  
Whose light is a spark and his life a span ?

The seed he sowed or the soil he cumbered,  
The time he served or the space he slumbered ;  
Will it profit a man when his days are numbered,  
Or his deeds since the days of his life began ?

One, glad because of the light, saith, ' Shall not  
The righteous Judge of all the earth do right,  
For behold the sparrows on the house-tops fall not  
Save as seemeth to Him good in His sight ? '  
And this man's joy shall have no abiding  
Through lights departing and lives dividing,  
He is soon as one in the darkness hiding,  
One loving darkness rather than light.

A little season of love and laughter,  
Of light and life, and pleasure and pain,  
And a horror of outer darkness after,  
And dust returneth to dust again.  
Then the lesser life shall be as the greater,  
And the lover of life shall join the hater,  
And the one thing cometh sooner or later,  
And no one knoweth the loss or gain.

Love of my life ! we had lights in season—  
Hard to part from, harder to keep—  
We had strength to labour and souls to reason,  
And seed to scatter and fruits to reap.  
Though time estranges and fate disperses,  
We have *had* our loves and our loving-mercies ;  
Though the gifts of the light in the end are curses,  
Yet bides the gift of the darkness—sleep !

See ! girt with tempest and winged with thunder,  
And clad with lightning and shod with sleet,  
The strong winds treading the swift waves sunder  
The flying rollers with frothy feet.  
One gleam like a bloodshot sword-blade swims on  
The skyline, staining the green gulf crimson,  
A death-stroke fiercely dealt by a dim sun,  
That strikes through his stormy winding-sheet.

Oh ! brave white horses ! you gather and gallop,  
 The storm-sprite loosens the gusty reins ;  
 Now the stoutest ship were the frailest shallop  
 In your hollow backs, or your high arched manes.  
 I would ride as never a man has ridden  
 In your sleepy, swirling surges hidden,  
 To gulfs foreshadowed through straits forbidden,  
 Where no light wearies and no love wanes.

### PODAS OKUS

Am I waking ? Was I sleeping ?  
 Dearest, are you watching yet ?  
 Traces on your cheeks of weeping  
 Glitter, 'tis in vain you fret ;  
 Drifting ever ! drifting onward !  
 In the glass the bright sand runs  
 Steadily and slowly downward ;  
 Hushed are all the Myrmidons.

Has Automedon been banished  
 From his post beside my bed ?  
 Where has Agamemnon vanished ?  
 Where is warlike Diomed ?  
 Where is Nestor ? where Ulysses ?  
 Menelaus, where is he ?  
 Call them not, more dear your kisses  
 Than their prosings are to me.

Daylight fades and night must follow,  
 Low, where sea and sky combine,  
 Droops the orb of great Apollo,  
 Hostile god to me and mine.  
 Through the tent's wide entrance streaming,  
 In a flood of glory rare,  
 Glides the golden sunset, gleaming  
 On your golden, gleaming hair.

Chide him not, the leech who tarries,  
 Surest aid were all too late ;  
 Surer far the shaft of Paris,  
 Winged by Phœbus and by fate ;  
 When he crouched behind the gable,  
 Had I once his features scanned,  
 Phœbus' self had scarce been able  
 To have nerved his trembling hand.

Blue-eyed maiden ! dear Athena !  
 Goddess chaste, and wise, and brave,  
 From the snares of Polyxena  
 Thou would'st fain thy favourite save.  
 Tell me, is it not far better  
 That it should be as it is ?  
 Jove's behest we cannot fether,  
 Fate's decrees are always his.

Many seek for peace and riches,  
 Length of days and life of ease ;  
 I have sought for one thing, which is  
 Fairer unto me than these.  
 Often, too, I 've heard the story,  
 In my boyhood, of the doom  
 Which the fates assigned me—Glory,  
 Coupled with an early tomb.

Swift assault and sudden sally  
 Underneath the Trojan wall ;  
 Charge, and countercharge, and rally,  
 War-cry loud, and trumpet-call ;  
 Doubtful strain of desperate battle,  
 Cut and thrust and grapple fierce,  
 Swords that ring on shields that rattle,  
 Blades that gash and darts that pierce ;—

I have done with these for ever ;  
 By the loud resounding sea,  
 Where the reedy javelins quiver,  
 There is now no place for me.

Day by day our ranks diminish,  
We are falling day by day ;  
But our sons the strife will finish,  
Where man tarries man must slay.

Life, 'tis said, to all men sweet is,  
Death to all must bitter be ;  
Wherefore thus, O mother Thetis !  
None can baffle Jove's decree ?  
I am ready, I am willing,  
To resign my stormy life ;  
Weary of this long blood-spilling,  
Sated with this ceaseless strife.

Shorter doom I 've pictured dimly,  
On a bed of crimson sand ;  
Fighting hard and dying grimly,  
Silent lips, and striking hand ;  
But the toughest lives are brittle,  
And the bravest and the best  
Lightly fall—it matters little ;  
Now I only long for rest.

I have seen enough of slaughter,  
Seen Scamander's torrent red,  
Seen hot blood poured out like water,  
Seen the champaign heaped with dead.  
Men will call me unrelenting,  
Pitiless, vindictive, stern ;  
Few will raise a voice dissenting,  
Few will better things discern.

Speak ! the fires of life are reeling,  
Like the wildfires on the marsh,  
Was I to a friend unfeeling ?  
Was I to a mistress harsh ?  
Was there nought save bloodshed throbbing  
In this heart and on this brow ?  
Whisper ! girl, in silence sobbing !  
Dead Patroclus !, answer thou !

Dry those violet orbs that glisten,  
 Darling, I have had my day ;  
 Place your hand in mine and listen,  
 Ere the strong soul cleaves its way  
 Through the death-mist hovering o'er me.  
 As the stout ship cleaves the wave,  
 To my fathers, gone before me,  
 To the gods who love the brave !

Courage, we must part for certain ;  
 Shades that sink and shades that rise,  
 Blending in a shroud-like curtain,  
 Gather o'er these weary eyes.  
 O'er the fields we used to roam, in  
 Brighter days and lighter cheer,  
 Gathers thus the quiet gloaming—  
 Now, I ween, the end is near.

For the hand that clasps your fingers,  
 Closing in the death-grip tight,  
 Scarcely feels the warmth that lingers,  
 Scarcely heeds the pressure light ;  
 While the failing pulse that alters,  
 Changing 'neath a death-chill damp,  
 Flickers, flutters, flags, and falters  
 Feebly, like a waning lamp.

Think'st thou, love, 'twill chafe my ghost in  
 Hades' realm, where heroes shine,  
 Should I hear the shepherd boasting  
 To his Argive concubine ?  
 Let him boast, the girlish victor,  
 Let him brag ; not thus, I trow,  
 Were the laurels torn from Hector,  
 Not so very long ago.

Does my voice sound thick and husky ?  
 Is my hand no longer warm ?  
 Round that neck where pearls look dusky  
 Let me once more wind my arm ;

Rest my head upon that shoulder,  
Where it rested oft of yore ;  
Warm and white, yet seeming colder  
Now than ere it seemed before.

'Twas the fraud of Priam's daughter,  
Not the force of Priam's son,  
Slew me—ask not why I sought her,  
'Twas my doom—her work is done !  
Fairer far than she, and dearer  
By a thousand-fold thou art ;  
Come, my own one, nestle nearer,  
Cheating death of half his smart.

Slowly, while your amber tresses  
Shower down their golden rain,  
Let me drink those last caresses,  
Never to be felt again ;  
Yet th' Elysian halls are spacious,  
Somewhere near me I may keep  
Room—who knows ?—The gods are gracious ;  
Lay me lower—let me sleep !

Lower yet, my senses wander,  
And my spirit seems to roll  
With the tide of swift Scamander  
Rushing to a viewless goal.  
In my ears, like distant washing  
Of the surf upon the shore,  
Drones a murmur, faintly splashing,  
'Tis the splash of Charon's oar.

Lower yet, my own Briseis,  
Denser shadows veil the light ;  
Hush, what is to be, to be is,  
Close my eyes, and say good-night.  
Lightly lay your red lips, kissing,  
On this cold mouth, while your thumbs  
Lie on these cold eyelids pressing—  
Pallas ! thus thy soldier comes !

Crying—' God ! we have sinned, we have sinned ;  
We are bruised, we are shorn, we are thinned ;  
Our strength is turned to derision, our pride laid  
low in the dust.  
Our cedars are cleft by Thy lightnings, our oaks are  
strewed by Thy wind,  
And we fall on our faces seeking Thine aid, though  
Thy wrath is just.'

A SONG OF AUTUMN<sup>1</sup>

' WHERE shall we go for our garlands glad  
At the falling of the year,  
When the burnt-up banks are yellow and sad,  
When the boughs are yellow and sere ?  
Where are the old ones that once we had,  
And when are the new ones near ?  
What shall we do for our garlands glad  
At the falling of the year ? '

' Child ! can I tell where the garlands go ?  
Can I say where the lost leaves veer  
On the brown-burnt banks, when the wild winds  
blow,  
When they drift through the dead-wood drear ?  
Girl ! when the garlands of next year glow,  
*You* may gather again, my dear—  
But *I* go where the last year's lost leaves go  
At the falling of the year.'

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<sup>1</sup> Written October or November 1868, while he was staying with Mr. Robert Power at Toorak, for Mr. Power's little daughter.



Part II  
*Autobiographical Poems*

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TO MY SISTER<sup>1</sup>

ACROSS the trackless seas I go,  
No matter when or where,  
And few my future lot will know,  
And fewer still will care.  
My hopes are gone, my time is spent,  
I little heed their loss,  
And if I cannot feel content,  
I cannot feel remorse.

My parents bid me cross the flood,  
My kindred frowned at me ;  
They say I have belied my blood,  
And stained my pedigree.  
But I must turn from those who chide,  
And laugh at those who frown ;  
I cannot quench my stubborn pride,  
Nor keep my spirits down.

I once had talents fit to win  
Success in life's career,  
And if I chose a part of sin,  
My choice has cost me dear.

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<sup>1</sup> Written August 4, 1853, being three days before he sailed for Australia.

But those who brand me with disgrace  
Will scarcely dare to say  
They spoke the taunt before my face,  
And went unscathed away.

My friends will miss a comrade's face,  
And pledge me on the seas,  
Who shared the wine-cup or the chase,  
Or follies worse than these.  
A careless smile, a parting glass,  
A hand that waves adieu,  
And from my sight they soon will pass,  
And from my memory too.

I loved a girl not long ago,  
And, till my suit was told,  
I thought her breast as fair as snow,  
'Twas very near as cold ;  
And yet I spoke, with feelings more  
Of recklessness than pain,  
Those words I never spoke before,  
Nor never shall again.

Her cheek grew pale, in her dark eye  
I saw the tear-drop shine ;  
Her red lips faltered in reply,  
And then were pressed to mine.  
A quick pulsation of the heart,  
A flutter of the breath,  
A smothered sob—and thus we part  
To meet no more till death.

And yet I may at times recall  
Her memory with a sigh ;  
At times for me the tears may fall  
And dim her sparkling eye.  
But absent friends are soon forgot,  
And in a year or less,  
'Twill doubtless be another's lot  
Those very lips to press.

With adverse fate we best can cope  
When all we prize has fled ;  
And where there 's little left to hope,  
There 's little left to dread.  
Oh, time glides ever quickly by,  
Destroying all that 's dear ;  
On earth there 's little worth a sigh,  
And nothing worth a tear.

What fears have I ? What hopes in life ?  
What joys can I command ?  
A few short years of toil and strife  
In a strange and distant land !  
When green grass sprouts above this clay  
(And that might be ere long),  
Some friends may read these lines and say,  
The world has judged him wrong.

There is a spot not far away  
Where my young sister sleeps,  
Who seems alive but yesterday,  
So fresh her memory keeps ;  
For we have played in childhood there  
Beneath the hawthorn's bough,  
And bent our knee in childish prayer  
I cannot utter now.

Of late so reckless and so wild,  
That spot recalls to me  
That I was once a laughing child,  
As innocent as she ;  
And there, while August's wild flowers wave,  
I wandered all alone,  
Strewed blossoms on her little grave,  
And knelt beside the stone.

I seem to have a load to bear,  
A heavy choking grief ;  
Could I have forced a single tear  
I might have felt relief.

I think my hot and restless heart  
Has scorched the channels dry,  
From which those sighs of sorrow start  
To moisten cheek and eye.

Sister, farewell ! farewell once more  
To every youthful tie !  
Friends ! parents ! kinsmen ! native shore !  
To each and all good-bye !  
And thoughts which for the moment seem  
To bind me with a spell,  
Ambitious hope, love's boyish dream,  
To you a last farewell !

Repentance, when it comes too late,  
Will work but little good ;  
My faults I cannot vindicate,  
Nor would I if I could.  
I have a few short words to say  
Before my time is sped,  
Although so little use are they,  
They were as well unsaid.<sup>1</sup>

## AN EXILE'S FAREWELL<sup>2</sup>

THE ocean heaves around us still  
With long and measured swell,  
The autumn gales our canvas fill,  
Our ship rides smooth and well ;  
The broad Atlantic's bed of foam  
Still breaks against our prow ;  
I shed no tears at quitting home,  
Nor will I shed them now.

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<sup>1</sup> The final verse was discovered by Mr. W. Farmer Whyte of Sydney in the MSS he bought at Brighton, and published by him in *The Sydney Mail*.

<sup>2</sup> Written before leaving England in 1853.

Against the bulwarks on the poop  
I lean, and watch the sun  
Behind the red horizon stoop—  
His race is nearly run.  
Those waves will never quench his light,  
O'er which they seem to close,  
To-morrow he will rise as bright  
As he this morning rose.

How brightly gleams the orb of day  
Across the trackless sea !  
How lightly dance the waves that play  
Like dolphins on our lee !  
The restless waters seem to say  
In smothered tones to me,  
How many thousand miles away  
My native land must be !

Speak, Ocean, is my home the same,  
Now all is new to me ?  
The tropic skies' resplendent flame ?  
The vast expanse of sea ?  
Does all around her, yet unchanged,  
The well-known aspect wear ?  
Oh ! can the leagues that I have ranged  
Have made no difference there ?

How vivid Recollection's hand  
Recalls the scene once more ;  
I see the same tall poplars stand  
Beside the garden door ;  
I see the bird-cage hanging still ;  
And where my sister set  
The flowers in the window-sill—  
Can they be living yet ?

Let woman's nature cherish grief,  
I rarely heave a sigh,  
Before emotion takes relief  
In listless apathy ;

While from my pipe the vapours curl  
Towards the evening sky,  
And 'neath my feet the billows whirl  
In dull monotony.

The sky still wears the crimson streak  
Of Sol's departing ray,  
Some briny drops are on my cheek,  
'Tis but the salt sea-spray.  
Then let our barque the ocean roam,  
Our keel the billows plough ;  
I shed no tears at quitting home,  
Nor will I shed them now.

EARLY ADIEUX<sup>1</sup>

ADIEU to kindred hearts and home,  
To pleasure, joy, and mirth !  
A fitter foot than mine to roam  
Could scarcely tread the earth ;  
For they are now so few indeed  
(Not more than three in all)  
Whoe'er will think of me, or heed  
What fate may me befall.

For I through pleasure's paths have run  
My headlong goal to win,  
Now pleasure's snares have cared to shun  
When pleasure sweetened sin.  
Let those who will their failings mask,  
To mine I frankly own ;  
But for them pardon will I ask  
Of none—save Heaven alone.

---

<sup>1</sup> Written in England in 1850.

From carping friends I turn aside ;  
At foes' defiance frown ;  
Yet time may tame my stubborn pride,  
And break my spirit down.  
Still, if to error I incline,  
Truth whispers comfort strong,  
That never reckless act of mine  
E'er worked a comrade wrong.

My mother is a stately dame,  
Who oft would chide with me ;  
She saith my riot bringeth shame,  
And stains my pedigree.  
I'd reck not what my friends might know,  
Or what the world might say,  
Did I but think some tears would flow  
When I am far away.

Perchance my mother will recall  
My memory with a sigh ;  
My gentle sister's tears may fall,  
And dim her laughing eye ;  
Perhaps a loving thought may gleam,  
And fringe its saddened ray,  
When, like a nightmare's troubled dream,  
I, outcast, pass away.

Then once again farewell to those  
Whoe'er for me have sighed ;  
For pleasures melt away like snows,  
And hopes like shadows glide.  
Adieu, my mother ! if no more  
Thy son's face thou mayst see,  
At least those many cares are o'er  
So ofttimes caused by me.

My lot is fixed ! The die is cast !  
For me home hath no joy !  
Oh ! pardon then all follies past,  
And bless your wayward boy !

And thou, from whom for aye to part  
Grieves more than tongue can tell,  
May Heaven preserve thy guileless heart !  
Sweet sister, fare thee well !

Thou too, whose loving-kindness makes  
My resolution less,  
While from the bitter past it takes  
One half its bitterness,  
If e'er you held my memory dear,  
Grant this request, I pray—  
Give to that memory one bright tear,  
And let it pass away.

### A VOICE FROM THE BUSH<sup>1</sup>

HIGH noon, and not a cloud in the sky  
To break this blinding sun.  
Well, I 've half the day before me still,  
And most of my journey done.  
There 's little enough of shade to be got,  
But I 'll take what I can get,  
For I 'm not so hearty as once I was.  
Although I 'm a young man yet.

Young ! Well, yes, I suppose,  
As far as the seasons go,  
Though there 's many a man far older than I  
Down there in the town below—  
Older, but men to whom,  
In the pride of their manhood strong,  
The hardest work is never too hard,  
Or the longest day too long.

---

<sup>1</sup> Erroneously attributed to Gordon. It was really written by the late Mowbray Morris.



But I 've cut my cake, so I can't complain,  
And I 've only myself to blame ;  
Ah ! that was always their tune at home,  
And here it is just the same.  
Of the seed I 've sown in pleasure,  
The harvest I 'm reaping in pain ;  
Could I put my life a few years back,  
Would I live that life again ?

Would I ? Of course I would !  
What glorious days they were !  
It sometimes seems the dream of a dream  
That life could have been so fair  
A sweet but if a short time back,  
While now, if one can call  
This life, I almost doubt at times  
If it 's worth the living at all.

One of these poets, which is it ?  
Somewhere or another sings,  
That the crown of a sorrow's sorrow  
Is remembering happier things.  
What the crown of a sorrow's sorrow  
May be, I know not ; but this I know,  
It lightens the years that are now  
Sometimes to think of the years ago.

Where are they now, I wonder, with  
Whom those years were passed ?  
The pace was a little too good, I fear,  
For many of them to last.  
And there 's always plenty to take their place  
When the leaders begin to decline ;  
Still I wish them well where'er they are,  
For the sake of ' Auld Lang Syne.'

Jack Villiers—Gallopings Jack—  
(What a beggar he was to ride !)—  
Was shot in a gambling row last year,  
On the Californian side.



And Byng, the best of the lot,  
Who was broke in the Derby of '58,  
Is keeping sheep with Harry Lepel,  
Somewhere on the River Platte.

Do they ever think of me at all,  
And the fun we used to share ?  
It gives me a pleasant hour or two,  
And I've none too many to spare.  
This dull blood runs as it used to run,  
And the spent flame flickers up,  
As I think of the cheers that rang in my ears  
When I won the Garrison Cup.

And how the regiment roared to a man,  
While the voice of the fielders shook,  
As I swang in my stride six lengths to the good,  
Hard held, over Bosworth Brook.  
Instead of the parrot's screech,  
I seem to hear the twang of the horn,  
As once again from Barkly Holt,  
I set the pick of the Quorn.

Well those were harmless pleasures enough,  
For I hold him worse than an ass  
Who shakes his head at a nick in the post,  
Or a quick thing over the grass.  
Go for yourself, and go to win,  
And you can't very well go wrong.  
Gad, if I'd only stuck to that,  
I'd be singing a different song.

As to the one I'm singing,  
It's pretty well known to all ;  
We knew too much, but not quite enough,  
And so we went to the wall ;  
While those who cared not if the work was done  
How dirty their hands might be,  
Went up on our shoulders and kicked us down,  
When they got to the top of the tree.

But out there on the station among the  
lads,

I get on pretty well ;  
It's only when I get down into town  
That I feel this life such a hell.  
Booted and bearded and burned to a brick,  
I loaf along the street ;  
I watch the ladies tripping by,  
And I bless their dainty feet.

I watch them here and there,  
With a bitter feeling of pain ;  
Ah ! what wouldn't I give to feel  
A lady's hand again !  
They used to be glad to see me once,  
They might have been to-day ;  
But we never know the worth of a thing  
Until we have thrown it away.

I watch them but from afar,  
And I pull my old cap over my eyes—  
Partly to hide the tears that, rude and  
Rough as I am, will rise—  
And partly because I cannot bear  
That such as they should see  
The man that I am, when I know—  
Though they don't—the man that I ought  
to be.

Puff ! with the last whiff of my pipe,  
I blow these fancies away,  
For I must be jogging along if I want  
To get down to town to-day.  
As I know I shall reach my journey's end  
Though I travel not over fast ;  
So the end of my longer journey will come  
In its own good time at last.

## WHISPERINGS IN WATTLE-BOUGHS

Oh, gaily sings the bird ! and the wattle-boughs are  
stirred

And rustled by the scented breath of spring ;  
Oh, the dreary wistful longing ! Oh, the faces that are  
thronging !

Oh, the voices that are vaguely whispering !

Oh, tell me, father mine, ere the good ship crossed the  
brine,

On the gangway one mute handgrip we exchanged,  
Do you, past the grave, employ, for your stubborn,  
reckless boy,

Those petitions that in life were ne'er estranged ?

Oh, tell me, sister dear—parting word and parting tear  
Never passed between us ; let me bear the blame—  
Are you living, girl, or dead ? bitter tears since then  
I've shed

For the lips that lisp'd with mine a mother's name.

Oh, tell me, ancient friend, ever ready to defend

In our boyhood, at the base of life's long hill,  
Are you waking yet or sleeping ? have you left this  
vale of weeping ?

Or do you, like your comrade, linger still ?

Oh, whisper, buried love, is there rest and peace  
above ?—

There is little hope or comfort here below ;  
On your sweet face lies the mould, and your bed is  
straight and cold—

Near the harbour where the sea-tides ebb and flow

. . . . .

WHISPERINGS IN WATTLE-BOUGHS 139

All silent—they are dumb—and the breezes go and  
come

With an apathy that mocks at man's distress ;  
Laugh, scoffer, while you may ! I could bow me down  
and pray

For an answer that might stay my bitterness.

Oh, harshly screams the bird, and the wattle-bloom is  
stirred ;

There's a sullen, weird-like whisper in the bough :  
'Aye, kneel and pray and weep, but HIS BELOVED  
SLEEP

CAN NEVER BE DISTURBED BY SUCH AS THOU !!'

## Part II

### *Ballads*

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#### FAUCONSHAW

To fetch clear water out of the spring  
The little maid Margaret ran,  
From the stream to the castle's western wing  
It was but a bowshot span ;  
On the sedgy brink where the osiers cling  
Lay a dead man, pallid and wan.

The lady Mabel rose from her bed,  
And walked in the castle hall,  
Where the porch through the western turret led,  
She met with her handmaid small.  
'What aileth thee, Margaret ?' the lady said,  
'Hast let thy pitcher fall ?

'Say, what hast thou seen by the streamlet side—  
A nymph or a water-sprite—  
That thou comest with eyes so wild and wide,  
And with cheeks so ghostly white ?'  
'Nor nymph nor sprite,' the maiden cried,  
'But the corpse of a slaughtered knight.'

The lady Mabel summoned straight  
To her presence Sir Hugh de Vere,  
Of the guests who tarried within the gate  
Of Fauconshawe, most dear  
Was he to that lady ; betrothed in state  
They had been since many a year.

‘Little Margaret sayeth a dead man lies  
By the western spring, Sir Hugh ;  
I can scarce believe that the maiden lies—  
Yet scarce can believe her true.’  
And the knight replies, ‘Till we test her eyes  
Let her words gain credence due.’

Down the rocky path knight and lady led,  
While guests and retainers bold  
Followed in haste, for like wildfire spread  
The news by the maiden told,  
They found ’twas even as she had said—  
The corpse had some while been cold.

How the spirit had passed in the moments last  
There was little trace to reveal ;  
On the still calm face lay no imprint ghast,  
Save the angel’s solemn seal,  
Yet the hands were clenched in a death-grip fast,  
And the sods stamped down by the heel.

Sir Hugh by the side of the dead man knelt,  
Said, ‘Full well these features I know ;  
We have faced each other where blows were dealt,  
And he was a stalwart foe ;  
I had rather have met him hilt to hilt  
Than have found him lying low.’

He turned the body up on its face,  
And never a word was spoken,  
While he ripped the doublet, and tore the lace,  
And tugged—by the self-same token—  
And strained, till he wrenched it out of its place,  
The dagger-blade that was broken.

Then he turned the body over again,  
And said, while he rose upright,  
‘May the brand of Cain, with its withering stain,  
On the murderer’s forehead light,



For he never was slain on the open plain,  
Nor yet in the open fight.'

Solemn and stern were the words he spoke,  
And he looked at his lady's men,  
But his speech no answering echoes woke,  
All were silent there and then,  
Till a clear, cold voice the silence broke :—  
Lady Mabel cried, ' Amen.'

His glance met hers, the twain stood hushed,  
With the dead between them there ;  
But the blood to her snowy temples rushed  
Till it tinged the roots of her hair,  
Then paled, but a thin red streak still flushed  
In the midst of her forehead fair.

Four yeomen raised the corpse from the ground,  
At a sign from Sir Hugh de Vere,  
It was borne to the western turret round,  
And laid on a knightly bier,  
With never a sob nor a mourning sound,—  
No friend to the dead was near.

Yet that night was neither revel nor dance  
In the halls of Fauconshawe ;  
Men looked askance with a doubtful glance  
At Sir Hugh, for they stood in awe  
Of his prowess, but he, like one in a trance,  
Regarded naught that he saw.

. . . . .

Night black and chill, wind gathering still,  
With its wail in the turret tall,  
And its headlong blast like a catapult cast,  
On the crest of the outer wall,  
And its hail and rain on the crashing pane,  
Till the glassy splinters fall ;

A moody knight by the fitful light  
Of the great hall fire below ;  
A corpse upstairs, and a woman at prayers,  
Will they profit her, aye or no ?  
By 'r lady fain, an' she comfort gain,  
There is comfort for us also.

The guests were gone, save Sir Hugh alone,  
And he watched the gleams that broke  
On the pale hearth-stone, and flickered and shone  
On the panels of polished oak ;  
He was 'ware of no presence except his own,  
Till the voice of young Margaret spoke :

' I 've risen, Sir Hugh, at the mirk midnight,  
I cannot sleep in my bed,  
Now, unless my tale can be told aright,  
I wot it were best unsaid ;  
It hes, the blood of yon northern knight,  
On my lady's hand and head.'

' Oh ! the wild wind raves and rushes along,  
But thy ravings seem more wild—  
She never could do so foul a wrong—  
Yet I blame thee not, my child,  
For the fevered dreams on thy rest that throng !'—  
He frowned, though his speech was mild.

' Let storm-winds eddy, and scream, and hurl  
Their wrath, they disturb me naught ;  
The daughter she of a highborn earl,  
No secret of hers I 've sought ;  
I am but the child of a peasant churl,  
Yet look to the proofs I 've brought ;

' This dagger snapped so close to the hilt—  
Dost remember thy token well ?  
Will it match with the broken blade that spilt  
His life in the western dell ?

Nay ; read her handwriting, an thou wilt,  
From her paramour's breast it fell.'

The knight in silence the letter read,  
Oh ! the characters well he knew !  
And his face might have matched the face of the dead  
So ashen white was its hue !  
Then he tore the parchment shred by shred,  
And the strips in the flames he threw.

And he muttered, 'Densely those shadows fall  
In the copse where the alders thicken ;  
There she bade him come to her, once for all,—  
Now, I well may shudder and sicken ;—  
Gramercy ! that hand so white and small,  
How strongly it must have stricken.'

. . . . .

At midnight hour, in the western tower,  
Alone with the dead man there,  
Lady Mabel kneels, nor heeds nor feels  
The shock of the rushing air,  
Though the gusts that pass through the riven glass  
Have scattered her raven hair.

Across the floor, through the opening door,  
Where standeth a stately knight,  
The lamplight streams, and flickers, and gleams,  
On his features stern and white—  
'Tis Sir Hugh de Vere, and he cometh more near,  
And the lady standeth upright.

' 'Tis little,' he said, 'that I know or care  
Of the guilt (if guilt there be)  
That lies 'twixt thee and yon dead man there,  
Nor matters it now to me ;  
I thought thee pure, thou art only fair,  
And to-morrow I cross the sea.

‘He perished ! I ask not why or how ?  
I come to recall my troth ;  
Take back, my lady, thy broken vow,  
Give back my allegiance oath ;  
Let the past be buried between us now  
For ever—’tis best for both.

‘Yet, Mabel, I could ask, dost thou dare  
Lay hand on that corpse’s heart,  
And call on thy Maker, and boldly swear  
That thou hadst in his death no part ?  
I ask not, while threescore proofs I share  
With one doubt — uncondemned thou  
art.’

Oh ! cold and bleak upon Mabel’s cheek  
Came the blast of the storm-wind keen,  
And her tresses black, as the glossy back  
Of the raven, glanced between  
Her fingers slight, like the ivory white,  
As she parted their sable sheen.

Yet with steady lip, and with fearless  
eye,  
And with cheek like the flush of dawn,  
Unflinchingly she spoke in reply—  
‘Go hence with the break of morn,  
I will neither confess, nor yet deny,  
I will return thee scorn for scorn.’

The knight bowed low as he turned to  
go ;  
He travelled by land and sea,  
But naught of his future fate I know,  
And naught of his fair ladye ;—  
My story is told as, long ago,  
My story was told to me.

## RIPPLING WATER

THE maiden sat by the river-side  
    (The rippling water murmurs by),  
And sadly into the clear blue tide  
    The salt tear fell from her clear blue eye.  
' 'Tis fixed for better, for worse,' she cried,  
' And to-morrow the bridegroom claims the bride.  
Oh! wealth and power and rank and pride  
    Can surely peace and happiness buy.  
I was merry, nathless, in my girlhood's hours,  
    'Mid the waving grass, when the bright sun shone,  
Shall I be as merry in Marmaduke's towers ? '  
    (The rippling water murmurs on).

Stephen works for his daily bread  
    (The rippling water murmurs low).  
Through the crazy thatch that covers his head  
    The raindrops fall and the wind-gusts blow.  
' I 'll mend the old roof-tree,' so he said,  
' And repair the cottage when we are wed,'  
And my pulses throbbed, and my cheek grew red,  
    When he kissed me—that was long ago.  
Stephen and I, should we meet again,  
    Not as we 've met in days that are gone,  
Will my pulses throb with pleasure or pain ?  
    (The rippling water murmurs on).

Old Giles, the gardener, stroked my curls  
    (The rippling water murmurs past),  
Quoth he, ' In laces and silks and pearls  
    My child will see her reflection cast ;  
Now I trust in my heart that your lord will be  
Kinder to you than he was to me,  
When I lay in the gaol, and my children three  
    With their sickly mother kept bitter fast.'

With Marmaduke now my will is law,  
Marmaduke's will may be law anon ;  
Does the sheath of velvet cover the claw ?  
(The rippling water murmurs on).

Dame Martha patted me on the cheek  
(The rippling water murmurs low),  
Saying, ' There are words that I fain would speak—  
Perhaps they were best unspoken though ;  
I can't persuade you to change your mind,  
And useless warnings are scarcely kind,  
And I may be foolish as well as blind,  
But take my blessing whether or no.'  
Dame Martha's wise though her hair is white,  
Her sense is good though her sight is gone—  
Can she really be gifted with second sight ?  
(The rippling water murmurs on).

Brian of Hawksmede came to our cot  
(The rippling water murmurs by),  
Scattered the sods of our garden plot,  
Riding his roan horse recklessly ;  
Trinket and token and tress of hair,  
He flung them down at the doorstep there,  
Said, ' Elsie ! ask your lord, if you dare,  
Who gave him the blow as well as the lie.'  
That evening I mentioned Brian's name,  
And Marmaduke's face grew white and wan ;  
Am I pledged to one of a spirit so tame ?  
(The rippling water murmurs on).

Brian is headstrong, rash, and vain  
(The rippling water murmurs still),  
Stephen is somewhat duller of brain,  
Slower of speech, and milder of will ;  
Stephen must toil a living to gain,  
Plough and harrow and gather the grain ;  
Brian has little enough to maintain  
The station in life which he needs must fill ;

Both are fearless and kind and frank,  
But we can't win all gifts under the sun—  
What have I won, save riches and rank ?  
(The rippling water murmurs on).

Riches and rank, and what beside  
(The rippling water murmurs yet),  
The mansion is stately, the manor is wide.  
Their lord for a while may pamper and pet ;  
Liveried lackeys may jeer aside,  
Though the peasant girl is their master's bride,  
At her shyness mingled with awkward pride,—  
'Twere folly for trifles like these to fret ;  
But the love of one that I cannot love,  
Will it last when the gloss of his toy is gone ?  
Is there naught beyond, below, or above ?  
(The rippling water murmurs on).

### UNSHRIVEN

OH ! the sun rose on the lea, and the bird sang merrilie,  
And the steed stood ready harnessed in the hall,  
And he left his lady's bower, and he sought the eastern  
tower,  
And he lifted cloak and weapon from the wall.

'We were wed but yester-noon, must we separate so soon,  
Must you travel unassoiled and, aye, unshriven,  
With the bloodstain on your hand, and the red streak  
on your brand,  
And your guilt all unconfessed and unforgiven ? '

'Though it were but yester-even we were wedded, still  
unshriven,  
Across the moor this morning I must ride ;  
I must gallop fast and straight, for my errand will not  
wait ;  
Fear naught, I shall return at eventide.'

' If I fear, it is for thee, thy weal is dear to me,  
Yon moor with retribution seemeth rife ;  
As we 've sown so must we reap, and I 've started in  
my sleep  
At the voice of the avenger, " Life for life." '

' My arm is strong, I ween, and my trusty blade is  
keen,  
And the courser that I ride is swift and sure,  
And I cannot break my oath, though to leave thee I  
am loth,  
There is one that I must meet upon the moor.'

. . . . .  
Oh ! the sun shone on the lea, and the bird sang merrilie,  
Down the avenue and through the iron gate,  
Spurred and belted, so he rode, steel to draw and  
steel to goad,  
And across the moor he galloped fast and straight.

. . . . .  
Oh ! the sun shone on the lea, and the bird sang full of  
glee,  
Ere the mists of evening gathered chill and grey ;  
But the wild bird's merry note on the deaf ear never  
smote,  
And the sunshine never warmed the lifeless clay.

Ere the sun began to droop, or the mist began to  
stoop,  
The youthful bride lay swooning in the hall ;  
Empty saddle on his back, broken bridle hanging slack,  
The steed returned full gallop to the stall.

Oh ! the sun sank in the sea, and the wind wailed  
drearilie ;  
Let the bells in yonder monastery toll,  
For the night-rack nestles dark round the body stiff  
and stark,  
And unshriven to its Maker flies the soul.



## THE THREE FRIENDS

## FROM THE FRENCH

THE sword slew one in deadly strife ;  
One perished by the bowl ;  
The third lies self-slain by the knife ;  
For three the bells may toll—  
I loved her better than my life,  
And better than my soul.

Aye, father ! hast thou come at last ?  
'Tis somewhat late to pray ;  
Life's crimson tides are ebbing fast,  
They drain my soul away ;  
Mine eyes with film are overcast,  
The lights are waning grey.

This curl from her bright head I shore,  
And this her hands gave mine ;  
See, one is stained with purple gore,  
And one with poisoned wine ;  
Give these to her when all is o'er—  
How serpent-like they twine !

We three were brethren in arms,  
And sworn companions we ;  
We held this motto, ' Whoso harms  
The one shall harm the three ! '  
Till, matchless for her subtle charms,  
Beloved of each was she.

(These two were slain that I might kiss  
Her sweet mouth. I did well ;  
I said, ' There is no greater bliss  
For those in heaven that dwell ' ;  
I lost her ; then I said, ' There is  
No fiercer pang in hell ! ')

We have upheld each other's rights,  
Shared purse and borrowed blade ;  
Have stricken side by side in fights ;  
And side by side have prayed  
In churches. We were Christian knights,  
And she a Christian maid.

We met at sunrise, he and I,  
My comrade—'twas agreed  
The steel our quarrel first should try,  
The poison should succeed ;  
For two of three were doomed to die,  
And one was doomed to bleed.

We buckled to the doubtful fray,  
At first, with some remorse ;  
But he who must be slain—or slay,  
Soon strikes with vengeful force.  
He fell ; I left him where he lay,  
Among the trampled gorse.

Did passion warp my heart and head  
To madness ? And, if so,  
Can madness palliate bloodshed ?—  
It may be—I shall know  
When God shall gather up the dead  
From where the four winds blow.

We met at sunset, he and I—  
My second comrade true ;  
Two cups with wine were brimming high.  
And one was drugged—we knew  
Not which, nor sought we to descry ;  
Our choice by lot we drew.

And there I sat with him to sup :  
I heard him blithely speak  
Of bygone days—the fatal cup  
Forgotten seemed—his cheek

Was ruddy : Father, raise me up,  
My voice is waxing weak.

We drank ; his lips turned livid white,  
His cheeks grew leaden ash ;  
He reeled—I heard his temples smite  
The threshold with a crash !  
And from his hand, in shivers bright,  
I saw the goblet flash.

The morrow dawned with fragrance rare,  
The May-breeze from the west  
Just fanned the sleepy olives, where  
She heard and I confessed ;  
My hair entangled with her hair,  
Her breast strained to my breast.

On the dread verge of endless gloom  
My soul recalls that hour ;  
Skies languishing with balm of bloom,  
And fields aflame with flower ;  
And slow caresses that consume,  
And kisses that devour.

Ah ! now with storm the day seems rife,  
My dull ears catch the roll  
Of thunder, and the far sea strife,  
On beach and bar and shoal—  
I loved her better than my life,  
And better than my soul.

She fled ! I cannot prove her guilt,  
Nor would I an' I could ;  
See ! life for life is fairly spilt,  
And blood is shed for blood ;  
Her white hands neither touched the hilt,  
Nor yet the potion brewed.

Aye ! turn me from the sickly south,  
Towards the gusty north ;  
The fruits of sin are dust and drouth,  
The end of crime is wrath—  
The lips that pressed her rose-like mouth  
Are choked with blood-red froth.

Then dig the grave-pit deep and wide,  
Three graves thrown into one,  
And lay three corpses side by side,  
And tell their tale to none ;  
But bring her back in all her pride  
To see what she hath done.

## Part II

### *Miscellaneous*

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#### CUI BONO

O WIND that whistles o'er thorns and thistles,  
Of this fruitful earth like a goblin elf;  
Why should he labour to help his neighbour  
Who feels too reckless to help himself?  
The wail of the breeze in the bending trees  
Is something between a laugh and a groan;  
And the hollow roar of the surf on the shore  
Is a dull, discordant monotone;  
I wish I could guess what sense they express,  
There's a meaning, doubtless, in every sound,  
Yet no one can tell, and it may be as well—  
Whom would it profit?—The world goes round!

On this earth so rough, we know quite enough,  
And, I sometimes fancy, a little too much;  
The sage may be wiser than clown or than kaiser,  
Is he more to be envied for being such?  
Neither more nor less, in his idleness  
The sage is doomed to vexation sure;  
The kaiser may rule, but the slippery stool  
That he calls his throne, is no sinecure;  
And as for the clown, you may give him a crown,  
Maybe he'll thank you, and maybe not,  
And before you can wink, he may spend it in drink—  
To whom does it profit?—We ripe and rot!

Yet under the sun much work is done  
By clown and kaiser, by serf and sage ;  
All sow and some reap, and few gather the heap  
Of the garnered grain of a bygone age.  
By sea or by soil man is bound to toil,  
And the dreamer, waiting for time and tide,  
For awhile may shirk his share of the work,  
But he grows with his dream dissatisfied ;  
He may climb to the edge of the beetling ledge,  
Where the loose crag topples and wellnigh reels  
'Neath the lashing gale, but the tonic will fail—  
What does it profit ?—Wheels within wheels !

Aye ! work we must, or with idlers rust,  
And eat we must our bodies to nurse ;  
Some folk grow fatter—what does it matter ?  
I 'm blest if I do—quite the reverse ;  
'Tis a weary round to which we are bound,  
The same thing over and over again ;  
Much toil and trouble, and a glittering bubble,  
That rises and bursts, is the best we gain ;  
And we murmur, and yet, 'tis certain, we get  
What good we deserve—can we hope for more ?—  
They are roaring, those waves, in their echoing caves—  
To whom do they profit ?—Let them roar !

## CONFITEOR

THE shore-boat lies in the morning light,  
By the good ship ready for sailing ;  
The skies are clear, and the dawn is bright,  
Though the bar of the bay is flecked with white,  
And the wind is fitfully wailing ;  
Near the tiller stands the priest, and the knight  
Leans over the quarter-railing.

' There is time while the vessel tarries still,  
There is time while her shrouds are slack,  
There is time ere her sails to the west wind fill,  
Ere her tall masts vanish from town and from hill,  
Ere cleaves to her keel the track :  
There is time for confession to those who will,  
To those who may never come back.'

' Sir priest, you can shrive these men of mine,  
And, I pray you, shrive them fast,  
And shrive those hardy sons of the brine,  
Captain and mates of the *Eglantine*,  
And sailors before the mast ;  
Then pledge me a cup of the Cyprus wine,  
For I fain would bury the past.'

' And hast thou naught to repent, my son ?  
Dost thou scorn confession and shrift ?  
Ere thy sands from the glass of time shall run  
Is there naught undone that thou shouldst have done,  
Naught done that thou shouldst have left ?  
The guiltiest soul may from guilt be won,  
And the stoniest heart may be cleft.'

' Have my ears been closed to the prayer of the poor,  
Or deaf to the cry of distress ?  
Have I given little, and taken more ?  
Have I brought a curse to the widow's door ?  
Have I wronged the fatherless ?  
Have I steeped my fingers in guiltless gore,  
That I must perforce confess ? '

' Have thy steps been guided by purity  
Through the paths with wickedness rife ?  
Hast thou never smitten thine enemy ?  
Hast thou yielded naught to the lust of the eye,  
And naught to the pride of life ?  
Hast thou passed all snares of pleasure by ?  
Hast thou shunned all wrath and strife ? '

'Nay, certes ! a sinful life I've led,  
Yet I've suffered, and lived in hope ;  
I may suffer still, but my hope has fled,—  
I've nothing now to hope or to dread,  
And with fate I can fairly cope ;  
Were the waters closing over my head,  
I should scarcely catch at a rope.'

'Dost suffer ? thy pain may be fraught with grace,  
Since never by works alone  
We are saved ;—the penitent thief may trace  
The wealth of love in the Saviour's face  
To the Pharisee rarely shown ;  
And the Magdalene's arms may yet embrace  
The foot of the jasper throne.'

'Sir priest, a heavier doom I dree,  
For I feel no quickening pain,  
But a dull, dumb weight, when I bow my knee,  
And (not with the words of the Pharisee)  
My hard eyes heavenward strain,  
Where my dead darling prayeth for me !  
Now, I wot, she prayeth in vain !

'Still I hear it over the battle's din,  
And over the festive cheer,—  
So she prayed with clasped hands, white and thin,—  
The prayer of a soul absolved from sin,  
For a soul that is dark and drear,  
For the light of repentance bursting in,  
And the flood of the blinding tear.

'Say, priest ! when the saint must vainly plead,  
Oh ! how shall the sinner fare ?  
I hold your comfort a broken reed ;  
Let the withered branch for itself take heed,  
While the green shoots wait your care ;  
I've striven, though feebly, to grasp your creed,  
And I've grappled my own despair.'



‘ By the little within thee, good and brave,  
Not wholly shattered, though shaken ;  
By the soul that crieth beyond the grave,  
The love that He once in His mercy gave,  
In His mercy since retaken,  
I conjure thee, O sinner, pardon crave !  
I implore thee, O sleeper, waken ! ’

‘ Go to ! shall I lay my black soul bare  
To a vain, self-righteous man ?  
In my sin, in my sorrow, you may not share,  
And yet, could I meet with one who must bear  
The load of an equal ban,  
With him I might strive to blend one prayer,  
The wail of the Publican.’

‘ My son, I too am a withered bough,  
My place is to others given ;  
Thou hast sinned, thou sayest ; I ask not how,  
For I too have sinned, even as thou,  
And I too have feebly striven,  
And with thee I must bow, crying, “ Shrive us now !  
Our Father which art in heaven ! ” ’

## SUNLIGHT ON THE SEA

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF A FEAST

MAKE merry, comrades, eat and drink  
(The sunlight flickers on the sea),  
The garlands gleam, the glasses clink,  
The grape-juice mantles fair and free,  
The lamps are trimmed, although the light  
Of day still lingers on the sky ;  
We sit between the day and night,  
And push the wine-flask merrily.

I see you feasting round me still,  
All gay of heart and strong of limb ;  
Make merry, friends, your glasses fill,  
The lights are growing dim.

I miss the voice of one I 've heard  
(The sunlight sinks upon the sea),  
He sang as blythe as any bird,  
And shook the rafters with his glee ;  
But times have changed with him, I wot,  
By fickle fortune crossed and flung ;  
Far stouter heart than mine he 's got  
If now he sings as then he sung,  
Yet some must swim when others sink ;  
And some must sink when others swim ;  
Make merry, comrades, eat and drink,  
The lights are growing dim.

I miss the face of one I 've loved  
(The sunlight settles on the sea)—  
Long since to distant climes he roved.  
He had his faults, and so have we ;  
His name was mentioned here this day,  
And it was coupled with a sneer ;  
I heard, nor had I aught to say,  
Though once I held his memory dear ;  
Who cares, 'mid wines and fruit and flowers,  
Though death or danger compass him,  
He had his faults, and we have ours,  
The lights are growing dim.

I miss the form of one I know  
(The sunlight wanes upon the sea)—  
'Tis not so very long ago  
We drank his health with three-times-three,  
And we were gay when he was here ;  
And he is gone, and we are gay.  
Where has he gone ? or far or near ?  
Good sooth, 'twere somewhat hard to say.

You glance aside, you doubtless think  
My homily a foolish whim,  
'Twill soon be ended, eat and drink,  
The lights are growing dim.

The fruit is ripe, the wine is red  
(The sunlight fades upon the sea) ;  
To us the absent are the dead,  
The dead to us must absent be.  
We too the absent ranks must join ;  
And friends will censure and forget :  
There 's metal base in every coin ;  
Men vanish, leaving traces yet  
Of evil, and of good behind,  
Since false notes taint the skylark's hymn.  
And dross still lurks in gold refined—  
The lights are growing dim.

We eat or drink or e'er we die  
(The sunlight flushes on the sea).  
Three hundred soldiers feasted high  
An hour before Thermopylæ ;  
Leonidas poured out the wine,  
And shouted ere he drained the cup,  
' Ho ! comrades, let us gaily dine—  
This night with Plato we shall sup ' ;  
And if they leant upon a reed,  
And if their reed was slight and slum,  
There 's something good in Spartan creed—  
The lights are growing dim.

Make merry, comrades, eat and drink  
(The sunlight flashes on the sea) ;  
My spirit is rejoiced to think  
That even as they were so are we ;  
For they, like us, were mortals vain,  
The slaves to earthly passions wild,  
Who slept with heaps of Persians slain  
For winding-sheets around them piled.

The dead man's deeds are living still—  
My Festive speech is somewhat grim—  
Their good obliterates their ill,  
The lights are growing dim.

We eat and drink, we come and go  
(The sunlight dies upon the sea).  
I speak in riddles. Is it so ?  
My riddles need not mar your glee ;  
For I will neither bid you share  
My thoughts, nor will I bid you shun,  
Though I should see in yonder chair  
Th' Egyptian's muffled skeleton.  
One toast with me your glasses fill,  
Aye, fill them level with the brim,  
*De mortuis, nisi bonum, nil !*  
The lights are growing dim.

## ARS LONGA

## A SONG OF PILGRIMAGE

OUR hopes are wild imaginings,  
Our schemes are airy castles,  
Yet these, on earth, are lords and kings,  
And we their slaves and vassals ;  
You dream, forsooth, of buoyant youth,  
Most ready to deceive is,  
But age will own the bitter truth,  
' *Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

The hill of life with eager feet  
We climbed in merry morning,  
But on the downward track we meet  
The shades of twilight warning ;

The shadows gaunt they fall aslant ;  
And those who scaled Ben Nevis,  
Against the mole-hills toil and pant,  
' *Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

The obstacles that barred our path  
We seldom quailed to dash on  
In youth, for youth one motto hath,  
' The will, the way must fashion.'  
Those words, I wot, blood thick and hot  
Too ready to believe is,  
But thin and cold our blood hath got,  
' *Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

And ' art is long,' and ' life is short,'  
And man is slow at learning ;  
And yet by divers dealings taught,  
For divers follies yearning,  
He owns at last, with grief downcast  
(For man disposed to grieve is)—  
One adage old stands true and fast,  
' *Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

We journey, manhood, youth, and age,  
The matron and the maiden,  
Like pilgrims on a pilgrimage,  
Loins girded, heavy laden :—  
Each pilgrim strong who joins our throng,  
Most eager to achieve is,  
Foredoomed ere long to swell the song,  
' *Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

At morn, with staff and sandal-shoon,  
We travel brisk and cheery,  
But some have laid them down ere noon,  
And all at eve are weary ;  
The noontide glows with no repose,  
And bitter chill the eve is,  
The grasshopper a burden grows,  
' *Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

The staff is snapped, the sandal frayed,  
The flint-stone galls and blisters,  
Our brother's steps we cannot aid,  
Ah, me ! nor aid our sister's ;  
The pit prepares its hidden snares,  
The rock prepared to cleave is,  
We cry, in falling unawares,  
' *Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

O Wisdom, which we sought to win !  
O Strength, in which we trusted !  
O Glory, which we gloried in !  
O puppets we adjusted !  
On barren land our seed is sand,  
And torn the web we weave is,  
The bruised reed hath pierced the hand,  
' *Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

We, too, ' Job's comforters ' have met,  
With steps, like ours, unsteady,  
They could not help themselves, and yet  
To judge us they were ready ;  
Life's path is trod at last, and God  
More ready to relieve is,  
They know, who rest beneath the sod,  
' *Mors gratum, vita brevis.*'

## BORROWED PLUMES

### A PREFACE AND A PIRACY

#### *Prologue*

OF borrowed plumes I take the sin,  
My extracts will apply  
To some few silly songs which in  
These pages scattered lie.

The words are Edgar Allan Poe's,<sup>1</sup>  
 As any man may see,  
 But what a *Poe*-t wrote in prose,  
 Shall make blank verse for me.

### *Epilogue*

And now that my theft stands detected,  
 The first of my extracts may call  
 To some of the rhymes here collected  
 Your notice, the second to all.

Ah ! friend, you may shake your head sadly,  
 Yet this much you 'll say for my verse,  
 I 've written of old something badly,  
 But written anew something worse.

## PASTOR CUM

### TRANSLATION FROM HORACE

WHEN he, that shepherd false, 'neath Phrygian sails,  
 Carried his hostess Helen o'er the seas,  
 In fitful slumber Nereus hushed the gales,  
 That he might sing their future destinies.  
 A curse to your ancestral home you take  
 With her, whom Greece, with many a soldier bold,  
 Shall seek again, in concert sworn to break  
 Your nuptial ties and Priam's kingdom old.  
 Alas ! what sweat from man and horse must flow,  
 What devastation to the Trojan realm

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<sup>1</sup> 'These trifles are collected and republished, chiefly with a view to their redemption from the many improvements to which they have been subjected while going at random the rounds of the press. I am naturally anxious that what I have written should circulate as I wrote it, if it circulate at all. . . . In defence of my own taste, nevertheless, it is incumbent upon me to say that I think nothing in this volume of much value to the public, or very creditable to myself.—E. A. P.'  
 —See Preface to Poe's *Poetical Works*

You carry, even now doth Pallas show  
Her wrath—preparing buckler, car, and helm.  
In vain, secure in Aphrodité's care,  
You comb your locks, and on the girlish lyre  
Select the strains most pleasant to the fair ;  
In vain, on couch reclining, you desire  
To shun the darts that threaten, and the thrust  
Of Cretan lance, the battle's wild turmoil,  
And Ajax swift to follow—in the dust  
Condemned, though late, your wanton curls to soil.  
Ah ! see you not where (fatal to your race),  
Laertes' son comes with the Pylean sage ;  
Fearless alike, with Teucer joins the chase  
Sthenelaus, skilled the fistie strife to wage,  
Nor less expert the fiery steeds to quell ;  
And Meriones you must know. Behold  
A warrior, than his sire more fierce and fell,  
To find you rages,—Diomed the bold,  
Whom, like the stag that, far across the vale  
The wolf being seen, no herbage can allure,  
So fly you, panting sorely, dastard pale !—  
Not thus you boasted to your paramour.  
Achilles' anger for a space defers  
The day of wrath to Troy and Trojan dame ;  
Inevitable glide the allotted years,  
And Dardan roofs must waste in Argive flame

## A LEGEND OF MADRID

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH

*Francesca*

CRUSHED and thronged are all the places  
In our amphitheatre,  
'Midst a sea of swarming faces  
I can yet distinguish her ;



Dost thou triumph, dark-browed Nina ?  
Is my secret known to thee ?  
On the sands of yon arena  
I shall yet my vengeance see.  
Now through portals fast careering  
Picadors are disappearing ;  
Now the barriers nimbly clearing  
Has the hindmost chulo flown.  
Clots of dusky crimson streaking  
Brindled flanks and haunches reeking,  
Wheels the wild bull, vengeance seeking,  
On the matador alone.  
Features by sombrero shaded,  
Pale and passionless and cold ;  
Doublet richly laced and braided,  
Trunks of velvet slashed with gold,  
Blood-red scarf and bare Toledo,—  
Mask more subtle, and disguise  
Far less shallow, thou dost need, O  
Traitor, to deceive my eyes.  
Shouts of noisy acclamation,  
Breathing savage expectation,  
Greet him while he takes his station  
Leisurely, disdaining haste ;  
Now he doffs his tall sombrero,  
Fools ! applaud your butcher hero,  
Ye would idolise a Nero,  
Pandering to public taste.

From the restless Guadalquivir  
To my sire's estates he came,  
Wooded and won me, how I shiver !  
Though my temples burn with shame.  
I, a proud and high-born lady,  
Daughter of an ancient race,  
'Neath the vine and olive shade I  
Yielded to a churl's embrace.

To a churl my vows were plighted,  
Well my madness he requited,  
Since, by priestly ties, united  
    To the muleteer's child ;  
And my prayers are wafted o'er him,  
That the bull may crush and gore him,  
Since the love that once I bore him  
    Has been changed to hatred wild.

*Nina*

Save him ! aid him ! O Madonna !  
    Two are slain if he is slain ;  
Shield his life and guard his honour,  
    Let me not entreat in vain.  
Sullenly the brindled savage  
    Tears and tosses up the sand ;  
Horns that rend and hoofs that ravage,  
    How shall man your shock withstand ?  
On the shaggy neck and head lie  
Frothy flakes, the eyeballs redly  
Flash, the horns so sharp and deadly  
    Lower, short, and strong, and straight ;  
Fast, and furious, and fearless,  
Now he charges ;—virgin peerless,  
Lifting lids, all dry and tearless,  
    At thy throne I supplicate.

*Francesca*

Cool and calm, the perjured varlet  
    Stands on strongly planted heel,  
In his left a strip of scarlet,  
    In his right a streak of steel ;  
Ah ! the monster topples over,  
    Till his haunches strike the plain !—  
Low-born clown and lying lover,  
    Thou has conquered once again.

*Nina*

Sweet Madonna, maiden mother,  
Thou hast saved him, and no other ;  
Now the tears I cannot smother,  
Tears of joy my vision blind ;  
Where thou sittest I am gazing,  
These glad, misty eyes upraising,  
I have prayed, and I am praising,  
Bless thee ! bless thee ! virgin kind.

*Francesca*

While the crowd still sways and surges,  
Ere the applauding shouts have  
ceased,  
See, the second bull emerges—  
'Tis the famed Cordovan beast,—  
By the picador ungoaded,  
Scatheless of the chulo's dart.  
Slay him, and with guerdon loaded,  
And with honours crowned depart.  
No vain brutish strife he wages,  
Never uselessly he rages,  
And his cunning, as he ages,  
With his hatred seems to grow ;  
Though he stands amid the cheering,  
Sluggish to the eye appearing,  
Few will venture on the spearing  
Of so resolute a foe.

*Nina*

Courage, there is little danger,  
Yonder dull-eyed craven seems  
Fitter far for stall and manger  
Than for scarf and blade that gleams ;

Shorter, and of frame less massive,  
Than his comrade lying low,  
Tame, and cowardly, and passive,—  
He will prove a feebler foe.  
I have done with doubt and anguish,  
Fears like dews in sunshine languish,  
Courage, husband, we shall vanquish,  
Thou art calm and so am I.  
For the rush he has not waited,  
On he strides with step elated,  
And the steel with blood unsated,  
Leaps to end the butchery.

*Francesca*

Tyro ! mark the brands of battle  
On those shoulders dusk and dun,  
Such as he is are the cattle  
Skilled tauridors gladly shun ;  
Warier than the Andalusian,  
Swifter far. though not so large,  
Think'st thou, to his own confusion,  
He, like him, will blindly charge ?  
Inch by inch the brute advances,  
Stealthy yet vindictive glances,  
Horns as straight as levelled lances,  
Crouching withers, stooping haunches ;—  
Closer yet, until the tightening  
Strains of rapt excitement heightening  
Grows oppressive. Ha ! like lightning  
On his enemy he launches.

*Nina*

O'er the horned front drops the streamer,  
In the nape the sharp steel hisses,  
Glances, grazes,—Christ ! Redeemer !  
By a hair the spine he misses.

*Francesca*

Hark ! that shock like muffled thunder,  
Booming from the Pyrenees !  
Both are down—the man is under—  
Now he struggles to his knees,  
Now he sinks, his features leaden  
Sharpen rigidly and deaden,  
Sands beneath him soak and redden,  
Skies above him spin and veer ;  
Through the doublet, torn and riven,  
Where the stunted horn was driven,  
Wells the life-blood.—We are even,  
Daughter of the muleteer !

## A FRAGMENT

THEY say that poison-sprinkled flowers  
Are sweeter in perfume  
Than when, untouched by deadly dew,  
They glowed in early bloom.

They say that men condemned to die  
Have quaffed the sweetened wine,  
With higher relish than the juice  
Of the untampered vine.

They say that in the witches' song,  
Though rude and harsh it be,  
There blends a wild, mysterious strain  
Of weirdest melody.

And I believe the devil's voice  
Sinks deeper in our ear  
Than any whisper sent from Heaven,  
However sweet and clear.

‘THE OLD LEAVEN’<sup>1</sup>

A DIALOGUE

*Mark*

So, Maurice, you sail to-morrow, you say ?  
 And you may or may not return ?  
 Be sociable, man ! for once in a way,  
 Unless you ’re too old to learn.  
 The shadows are cool by the water side  
 Where the willows grow by the pond,  
 And the yellow laburnums’ drooping pride  
 Sheds a golden gleam beyond.  
 For the blended tints of the summer flowers,  
 For the scents of the summer air,  
 For all nature’s charms in this world of ours,  
 ’Tis little or nought you care.  
 Yet I know for certain you haven’t stirred  
 Since noon from your chosen spot ;  
 And you ’ve hardly spoken a single word—  
 Are you tired, or cross, or what ?  
 You ’re fretting about those shares you bought,  
 They were to have gone up fast ;  
 But I heard how they fell to nothing—in short,  
 They were given away at last.

*Maurice*

No, Mark, I ’m not so easily crossed ;  
 ’Tis true that I ’ve had a run  
 Of bad luck lately ; indeed, I ’ve lost ;  
 Well ! somebody else has won.

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<sup>1</sup> Published anonymously in *The Australasian* in 1866.

*Mark*

The glass has fallen, perhaps you fear  
A return of your ancient stitch—  
That souvenir of the Lady's mere,  
Park palings and double ditch.

*Maurice*

You 're wrong. I 'm not in the least afraid  
Of that. If the truth be told,  
When the stiffness visits my shoulder-blade,  
I think on the days of old ;  
It recalls the rush of the freshening wind,  
The strain of the chestnut springing,  
And the rolling thunder of hoofs behind,  
Like the Rataplan chorus ringing.

*Mark*

Are you bound to borrow, or loth to  
lend ?  
Have you purchased another screw ?  
Or backed a bill for another friend ?  
Or had a bad night at loo ?

*Maurice*

Not one of those, you 're all in the dark,  
If you choose you can guess again ;  
But you 'd better give over guessing,  
Mark,  
It 's only labour in vain.

*Mark*

I 'll try once more ; does it plague you  
still,  
That trifle of lead you carry ?  
A guest that lingers against your will,  
Unwelcome, yet bound to tarry.

*Maurice*

Not so ! That burden I ’m used to bear,  
 ’Tis seldom it gives me trouble ;  
 And to earn it as I did then and there,  
 I ’d carry a dead weight double.  
 A shock like that for a splintered rib  
 Can a thousandfold repay—  
 As the swallow skims through the spider’s web,  
 We rode through their ranks that day !

*Mark*

Come, Maurice, you shan’t escape me so !  
 I ’ll hazard another guess ;  
 That girl that jilted you long ago,  
 You ’re thinking of her, confess !

*Maurice*

Though the blue lake flushed with a rosy light,  
 Reflected from yonder sky,  
 Might conjure a vision of Aphrodite  
 To a poet’s or painter’s eye ;  
 Though the golden drop, with its drooping curl,  
 Between the water and wood,  
 Hangs down like the tress of a wayward girl  
 In her dreamy maidenhood :  
 Such boyish fancies seem out of date,  
 To one half inclined to censure  
 Their folly, and yet—your shaft flew straight,  
 Though you drew your bow at a venture.  
 I saw my lady the other night  
 In the crowded opera hall,  
 When the boxes sparkled with faces bright ;  
 I knew her amongst them all.  
 Though little for these things now I reck,  
 I singled her from the throng  
 By the queenly curves of her head and neck,  
 By the droop of her eyelash long.



Oh ! passionless, placid, and calm, and cold,  
Does the fire still lurk within  
That lit her magnificent eyes of old,  
And coloured her marble skin ?  
For a weary look on the proud face hung,  
While the music clashed and swelled,  
And the restless child to the silk skirt clung  
Unnoticed though unrepelled.  
They 've paled, those rosebud lips that I kissed,  
That slim waist has thickened rather,  
And the cub has the sprawling mutton fist,  
And the great splay foot of the father.  
May the blight——

*Mark*

Hold hard there, Maurice, my son,  
Let her rest since her spell is broken ;  
We can neither recall deeds rashly done,  
Nor retract words hastily spoken.

*Maurice*

Time was when to pleasure her girlish whim,  
In my blind infatuation,  
I 've freely endangered life and limb ;  
Aye, perilled my soul's salvation.

*Mark*

With the best intentions we all must work,  
But little good and much harm ;  
Be a Christian for once, not a pagan Turk,  
Nursing wrath and keeping it warm.

*Maurice*

If our best intentions pave the way  
To a place that is somewhat hot,  
Can our worst intentions lead us, say,  
To a still more sultry spot ?

*Mark*

'Tis said that charity makes amends  
For a multitude of transgressions.

*Maurice*

But our perjured loves and our faithless friends  
Are entitled to no concessions.

*Mark*

Old man, these many years side by side  
Our parallel paths have lain,  
Now, in life's long journey, diverging wide,  
They can scarcely unite again;  
And though, from all that I've seen and  
heard,

You're prone to chafe and to fret  
At the least restraint, not one angry word  
Have we two exchanged as yet.  
We've shared our peril, we've shared our  
sport,

Our sunshine and gloomy weather,  
Feasted, and flirted, and fenced, and fought,  
Struggled and toiled together;  
In happier moments lighter of heart,  
Stouter of heart in sorrow;  
We've met and we've parted, and now we  
part

For ever, perchance, to-morrow.  
She's a matron now; when you knew her first  
She was but a child, and your hate,  
Fostered and cherished, and nourished and  
nursed,

Will it never evaporate?  
Your grievance is known to yourself alone  
But, Maurice, I say, for shame,  
If in ten long years you haven't outgrown  
Ill-will to an ancient flame.

*Maurice*

Well, Mark, you 're right ; if I spoke in spite,  
Let the shame and the blame be mine ;  
At the risk of a headache we 'll drain this night  
Her health in a flask of wine ;  
For a castle in Spain, though it never was built ;  
For a dream, though it never came true ;  
For a cup, just tasted, though rudely spilt,  
At least she can hold me due.  
Those hours of pleasure she dealt of yore,  
As well as those hours of pain,  
I ween they would flit as they flitted before,  
If I had them over again.  
Against her no word from my lips shall pass,  
Betraying the grudge I 've cherished,  
Till the sand runs down in my hour-glass,  
And the gift of my speech has perished.  
Say ! why is the spirit of peace so weak,  
And the spirit of wrath so strong,  
That the right we must steadily search and  
seek,  
Though we readily find the wrong ?

*Mark*

Our parents of old entailed the curse  
Which must to our children cling ;  
Let us hope, at least, that we 're not much  
worse  
Than the founder from whom we spring.  
Fit sire was he, of a selfish race,  
Who first to temptation yielded,  
Then to mend his case tried to heap disgrace  
On the woman he should have shielded.  
Say ! comrade mine, the forbidden fruit  
We 'd have plucked, that I well believe,  
But I trust we 'd rather have suffered mute  
Than have laid the blame upon Eve.

*Maurice (yawning)*

Who knows ? not I ; I can hardly vouch  
For the truth of what little I see ;  
And now, if you 've any weed in your pouch,  
Just hand it over to me.

FRAGMENTARY SCENES FROM  
THE ROAD TO AVERNUS

AN UNPUBLISHED DRAMATIC LYRIC

*Scene I.—DISCONTENT*

LAURENCE RABY.

*Laurence*

I SAID to young Allan M'Ilveray,  
Beside the swift swirls of the North,  
When, in hlac shot through with a silver ray,  
We hauled the strong salmon fish forth—  
Said only, ' He gave us some trouble  
To land him, and what does he weigh ?  
Our friend has caught one that weighs double,  
The game for the candle won't pay  
Us to-day,  
We may tie up our rods and away.'

I said to old Norman M'Gregor,  
Three leagues to the west of Glen Dhu—  
I had drawn, with a touch of the trigger,  
The best *bead* that ever I drew—  
Said merely, ' For birds in the stubble  
I once had an eye—I could swear  
He 's down—but he 's not worth the trouble  
Of seeking. You once shot a bear  
In his lair—  
'Tis only a buck that lies there.'

I said to Lord Charles only last year,  
The time that we topped the oak rail  
Between Wharton's plough and Whygne's pasture,  
And cleared the big brook in Blakesvale—  
We only—at Warburton's double  
He fell, then I finished the run  
And killed clean—said, 'So bursts a bubble  
That shone half an hour in the sun—  
What is won?  
Your sire cleared and captured a gun.'

I said to myself, in true sorrow,  
I said yestere'en, 'A fair prize  
Is won, and it may be to-morrow  
'Twill not seem so fair in thine eyes—  
Real life is a race through sore trouble,  
That gains not an inch on the goal,  
And bliss an intangible bubble  
That cheats an unsatisfied soul,  
And the whole  
Of the rest an illegible scroll.'

*Scene VII.*—TWO EXHORTATIONS

*A Shooting-box in the West of Ireland. A Bedchamber.*  
LAURENCE RABY and MELCHIOR. *Night.*

*Melchior*

SURELY, in the great beginning God made all things  
good, and still  
That soul-sickness men call sinning entered not  
without His will.  
Nay, our wisest have asserted that, as shade enhances  
light,  
Evil is but good perverted, wrong is but the foil of  
right.  
Banish sickness, then you banish joy for health to  
all that live :

Slay all sin, all good must vanish, good being but comparative.

Sophistry, you say—yet listen: look you skyward,  
there 'tis known

Worlds on worlds in myriads glisten—larger, lovelier  
than our own—

This has been, and this shall still be, here as there,  
in sun or star;

These things are to be and will be, those things were  
to be and are.

Man in man's imperfect nature is by imperfection  
taught:

Add one cubit to your stature if you can by taking  
thought.

*Laurence*

Thus you would not teach that peasant, though he  
calls you 'father.'

*Melchior*

I should magnify this present, mystify that future  
too—

We adapt our conversation always to our hearer's  
light.

*Laurence*

I am not of your persuasion.

*Melchior*

Yet the difference is but slight.

*Laurence*

I, *even I*, say, 'He who barter's worldly weal for  
heavenly worth

He does well'—your saints and martyrs were  
examples here on earth.

*Melchior*

Aye, in earlier Christian ages, while the heathen  
empire stood,  
When the war 'twixt saints and sages cried aloud  
for saintly blood.  
Christ was then their model truly. Now, if all were  
meek and pure,  
Save the ungodly and the unruly, would the Christian  
Church endure ?  
Shall the toiler or the fighter dream by day and watch  
by night,  
Turn the left cheek to the smiter, smitten rudely on  
the right ?  
Strong men must encounter bad men—so-called  
saints of latter days  
Have been mostly pious madmen, lusting after  
righteous praise—  
Or the thralls of superstition, doubtless worthy some  
reward,  
Since they came by their condition hardly of their  
free accord.  
'Tis but madness, sad and solemn, that these fakir-  
Christians feel—  
Saint Stylites on his column gratified a morbid zeal.

*Laurence*

By your showing, good is really on a par (of worth)  
with ill.

*Melchior*

Nay, I said not so ; I merely tell you both some  
ends fulfil—  
Priestly vows were my vocation, fast and vigil wait  
for me.  
You must work and face temptation. Never should  
the strong man flee,  
Though God wills the inclination with the soul at  
war to be. (*Pauses.*)

In the strife 'twixt flesh and spirit, while you can  
 the spirit aid,  
 Should you fall not less your merit, be not for a fall afraid.  
 Whatsoe'er most right, most fit is you shall do.  
 When all is done  
 Chaunt the noble *Nunc Dimittis*—*Benedicimur*, my  
 son. [Exit MELCHIOR.]

*Laurence (alone)*

Why do I provoke these wrangles? Melchior talks  
 (as well he may)

With the tongues of men and angels.

(*Takes up a pamphlet.*) What has this man got to say?  
 (*Reads.*) *Sic sacerdos fatur (ejus nomen quondam  
 erat Burgo).*

*Mala mens est, caro pejus, anima infirma, ergo*

*I nunc, ora, sine mora—orat etiam Sancta Virgo.*  
 (*Thinks.*)

(*Speaks.*) So it seems they mean to make her wed  
 the usurer, Nathan Lee.

Poor Estelle! her friends forsake her; what has  
 this to do with me?

Glad I am, at least, that Helen still refuses to discard  
 Her, through tales false gossips tell in spite or heed-  
 lessness.—'Tis hard!—

Lee, the Levite!—some few years back Herbert  
 horsewhipped him—the cur

Showed his teeth and laid his ears back. Now his  
 wealth has purchased her.

Must his baseness mar her brightness? Shall the  
 callous, cunning churl

Revel in the rosy whiteness of that golden-headed  
 girl? (*Thinks and smokes.*)

(*Reads.*) *Cito certe venit vitæ finis (sic sacerdos fatur),  
 Nunc audite omnes, ite, vobis fabula narratur*

*Nunc orate et laudate, laudat etiam Alma Mater.*

(*Muses.*) Such has been, and such shall still be, here  
 as there, in sun or star.



These things are to be and will be, those things were  
to be and are.

If I thought that speech worth heeding I should——  
Nay, it seems to me

More like Satan's special pleading than like *Gloria  
Domine.* (*Lies down on his couch.*)

(*Reads.*) *Et tuquoque frater meus facta mala quod  
fecisti*

*Denique confundit Deus omnes res quas tetegisti.*

*Nunc si unquam, nunc aut nunquam, sanguine adjuro  
Christi.*

### Scene IX.—IN THE GARDEN

*Aylmer's Garden, near the Lake.* LAURENCE RABY  
and ESTELLE.

*He*

COME to the bank where the boat is moored to the  
willow-tree low ;

Bertha, the baby, won't notice, Brian, the blockhead,  
won't know.

*She*

Bertha is not such a baby, sir, as you seem to suppose ;  
Brian, a blockhead he may be, more than you think  
for, he knows.

*He*

This much, at least, of your brother, from the begin-  
ning he knew

Somewhat concerning that other made such a fool of  
by you.

*She*

Firmer those bonds were and faster, Frank was my  
spaniel, my slave,

You ! you would fain be my master ; mark you !  
the difference is grave.

*He*

Call me your spaniel, your starling, take me and  
treat me as these,

I would be anything, darling ! aye, whatsoever you  
please.

Brian and Basil are 'punting,' leave them their dice  
and their wine,

Bertha is butterfly-hunting, surely one hour shall  
be mine.

See, I have done with all duty ; see, I can dare all  
disgrace,

Only to look at your beauty, feasting my eyes on your  
face.

*She*

Look at me, aye, till your eyes ache ! How, let me  
ask, will it end ?

Neither for your sake nor my sake, but for the sake  
of my friend ?

*He*

Is she your friend then ? I own it, this is all wrong,  
and the rest,

*Frustra sed anima monet, caro quod fortius est.*

*She*

Not quite so close, Laurence Raby, not with your  
arm round my waist ;

Something to look at I may be, nothing to touch  
or to taste.

*He*

Wilful as ever and wayward ; why did you tempt  
me, Estelle ?

*She*

You misinterpret each stray word, you for each inch  
take an ell.

Lightly all laws and ties trammel me, I am warned  
for all that.

*He (aside)*

Perhaps she will swallow her camel when she has  
strained at her gnat.

*She*

Therefore take thought and consider, weigh well,  
as I do, the whole,  
You for mere beauty a bidder, say, would you barter  
a soul ?

*He*

Girl ! *that may* happen, but *this is* ; after this welcome  
the worst ;  
Blest for one hour by your kisses, let me be evermore  
cursed.  
Talk not of ties to me reckless, here every tie I dis-  
card—  
Make me your girdle, your necklace—

*She*

Laurence, you kiss me too hard.

*He*

Aye, 'tis the road to Avernus, *n'est ce pas vrais donc,*  
*ma belle ?*  
There let them bind us or burn us, *mais le jeu vaut*  
*la chandelle.*  
Am I your lord or your vassal ? Are you my sun or  
my torch ?  
You, when I look at you, dazzle, yet when I touch  
you you scorch.

*She*

Yonder are Brian and Basil, watching us fools from  
the porch.

*Scene X.—AFTER THE QUARREL*

*Laurence Raby's Chamber. LAURENCE enters,  
a little the worse for liquor.*

*Laurence*

HE never gave me a chance to speak,  
And he called her—worse than a dog—  
The girl stood up with a crimson cheek,  
And I felled him there like a log.

I can feel the blow on my knuckles yet—  
He feels it more on his brow.  
In a thousand years we shall all forget  
The things that trouble us now.

*Scene XI.—TEN PACES OFF*

*An Open Country. LAURENCE RABY and FORREST,  
BRIAN AYLMER and PRESCOT.*

*Forrest*

I 'VE won the two tosses from Prescott ;  
Now hear me, and hearken and heed,  
And pull that vile flower from your waistcoat,  
And throw down that beast of a weed ;  
I 'm going to give you the signal  
I gave Harry Hunt at Boulogne,  
The morning he met Major Bignell,  
And shot him as dead as a stone ;  
For he must look round on his right hand  
To watch the white flutter—that stops  
His aim, for it takes off his sight, and  
*I cough while the handkerchief drops.*  
And you keep both eyes on his figure,  
Old fellow, and don't take them off.  
You 've got the sawhandled hair trigger—  
You sight him and shoot when I cough.

*Laurence (aside)*

Though God will never forgive me,  
 Though men make light of my name,  
 Though my sin and my shame outlive me,  
 I shall not outlast my shame.  
 The coward, does he mean to miss me ?  
 His right hand shakes like a leaf ;  
 Shall I live for my friends to hiss me,  
 Of fools and of knaves the chief ?  
 Shall I live for my foes to twit me ?  
 He has mastered his nerve again—  
 He is firm, he will surely hit me—  
 Will he reach the heart or the brain ?  
 One long look eastward and northward—  
 One prayer—‘ Our Father which art ’—  
 And the cough chimes in with the fourth word,  
 And I shoot skyward—the heart.

*Last Scene.—EXEUNT*

HELEN BABY.

WHERE the grave-deeps rot, where the grave-dews  
 rust,

They dug, crying, ‘ Earth to earth ’—  
 Crying, ‘ Ashes to ashes and dust to dust ’—  
 And what are my poor prayers worth ?  
 Upon whom shall I call, or in whom shall I trust,  
 Though death were indeed new birth ?

And they bid me be glad for my baby’s sake.

That she suffered sinless and young—  
 Would they have me be glad when my breasts still  
 ache

Where that small, soft, sweet mouth clung ?  
 I am glad that the heart will so surely break  
 That has been so bitterly wrung.

He was false, they tell me, and what if he were ?  
I can only shudder and pray,  
Pouring out my soul in a passionate prayer  
For the soul that he cast away ;  
Was there nothing that once was created fair  
In the potter's perishing clay ?

Is it well for the sinner that souls endure ?  
For the sinless soul is it well ?  
Does the pure child hsp to the angels pure ?  
And where does the strong man dwell,  
If the sad assurance of priests be sure,  
Or the tale that our preachers tell ?

The unclean has followed the undefiled,  
And the ill *may* regain the good,  
And the man *may* be even as the little child !  
We are children lost in the wood—  
Lord ! lead us out of this tangled wild,  
Where the wise and the prudent have been beguiled,  
And only the babes have stood.

## Part III

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### ASHTAROTH: A DRAMATIC LYRIC

#### DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HUGO, *a Norman Baron and a Scholar.*

ERIC, *a friend of Hugo's.*

THURSTON  
EUSTACE  
RALPH

} *Followers of Hugo.*

HENRY, *a Page.*

LUKE  
HUBERT

} *Monks living in a Norman Chapel.*

BASIL, *Abbot of a Convent on the Rhine.*

CYRIL, *a Monk of the same Convent.*

OSRIC, *a Norwegian Adventurer, and formerly a Corsair.*

RUDOLPH { *an Outlawed Count, and the Captain of a  
Band of Robbers.*

DAGOBERT { *the Captain of some predatory Soldiers called  
'Free Lances.'*

HAROLD, *a Danish Knight.*

ORION

THORA

AGATHA

ELSPETH, *a Nurse of Thora's*

URSULA, *Abbess of the Convent on the Rhine*

NUNS, ETC.

} WOMEN.

*Men-at-Arms, Soldiers, and Robbers ; Monks, Priars,  
and Churchmen ; Spirits, etc.*

*Scene—A CASTLE IN NORMANDY*

*A Study in a Tower ; HUGO seated at a table covered with maps and charts of the heavens, astronomical instruments, books, manuscripts, etc.*

*Enter Henry, a Page.*

*Hugo*

WELL, boy, what is it ?

*Henry*

The feast is spread.

*Hugo*

Why tarry the guests for me ?  
 Let Eric sit at the table's head ;  
 Alone I desire to be. *[Henry goes out.*  
 What share have I at their festive board ?  
 Their mirth I can only mar ;  
 To me no pleasure their cups afford,  
 Their songs on my silence jar.  
 With an aching eye and a throbbing brain,  
 And yet with a hopeful heart,  
 I must toil and strain with the planets again  
 When the rays of the sun depart ;  
 He who must needs with the topers tope,  
 And the feasters feast in the hall,  
 How can he hope with a matter to cope  
 That is immaterial !

*Orion*

He who his appetite stints and curbs,  
 Shut up in the northern wing,  
 With his rye-bread flavoured with bitter herbs,  
 And his draught from the tasteless spring,  
 Good sooth, he is but a sorry clown.  
 There are some good things upon earth—  
 Pleasure and power and fair renown,  
 And wisdom of worldly worth ;



There is wisdom in follies that charm the sense,  
 In follies that light the eyes,  
 But the folly to wisdom that makes pretence  
 Is alone by the fool termed wise.

*Hugo*

Thy speech, Orion, is somewhat rude ;  
 Perchance, having jeered and scoffed  
 To thy fill, thou wilt curb thy jeering mood ;  
 I wot thou hast served me oft.  
 This plan of the skies seems fairly traced ;  
 What errors canst thou detect ?

*Orion*

Nay, the constellations are misplaced,  
 And the satellites incorrect ;  
 Leave the plan to me ; you have time to seek  
 An hour of needful rest,  
 The night is young and the planets are weak :  
 See ! the sun still reddens the west.

*Hugo*

I fear I shall sleep too long.

*Orion*

If you do

It matters not much ; the sky  
 Is cloudy, the stars will be faint and few ;  
 Now, list to my lullaby.

(*Sings.*)

[*Hugo reclines on a couch.*]

Still the darkling skies are red,  
 Though the day-god's course is run ;  
 Heavenly night-lamps overhead  
 Flash and twinkle one by one.  
 Idle dreamer—earth-born elf !  
 Vainly grasping heavenly things,

Wherefore weariest thou thyself  
With thy vain imaginings ?

From the tree of knowledge first,  
Since his parents plucked the fruit,  
Man, with partial knowledge cursed,  
Of the tree still seeks the root ;  
Musty volumes crowd thy shelf—  
Which of these true knowledge brings ?  
Wherefore weariest thou thyself  
With thy vain imaginings ?

Will the stars from heaven descend ?  
Can the earth-worm soar and rise ?  
Can the mortal comprehend  
Heaven's own hallowed mysteries ?  
Greed and glory, power and pelf—  
These are won by clowns and kings ;  
Wherefore weariest thou thyself  
With thy vain imaginings ?

Sow and reap, and toil and spin ;  
Eat and drink, and dream and die ;  
Man may strive, yet never win,  
And I laugh the while and cry—  
Idle dreamer—earth-born elf !  
Vainly grasping heavenly things,  
Wherefore weariest thou thyself  
With thy vain imaginings ?

He sleeps, and his sleep appears serene,  
Whatever dreams it has brought him—  
[*Looks at the plans.*]  
If he knows what those hieroglyphics mean,  
He's wiser than one who taught him.  
Why does he number the Pole-star thus,  
Or the Pleiades why combine ?  
And what is he doing with Sirius !  
In the devil's name or in mine ?

Man thinks, discarding the beaten track,  
 That the sins of his youth are slain,  
 When he seeks fresh sins, but he soon comes  
     back  
 To his old pet sins again.

*Scene—THE SAME*

HUGO waking, ORION seated near him. *Daybreak.*

*Hugo*

OH, weary spirit ! oh, cloudy eyes !  
 Oh, heavy and misty brain !  
 Yon riddle that lies 'twixt earth and skies,  
     Ye seek to explore in vain !  
 See ! the east is grey ; put those scrolls away,  
     And hide them far from my sight ;  
 I will toil and study no more by day,  
     I will watch no longer by night ;  
 I have laboured and longed, and now I seem  
     No nearer the mystic goal ;  
 Orion, I fain would devise some scheme  
     To quiet this restless soul ;  
 To distant climes I would fain depart—  
     I would travel by sea or land.

*Orion*

Nay, I warned you of this, ' Short life, long art,'  
     The proverb, though stale, will stand ;  
 Full many a sage from youth to age  
     Has toiled to attain what you  
 Would master at once. In a pilgrimage,  
     Forsooth, there is nothing new ;  
 Though virtue, I ween, in change of scene,  
     And vigour in change of air,  
 Will always be, and has always been,  
     And travel is a tonic rare.

Still, the restless, discontented mood  
For the time alone is eased ;  
It will soon return with hunger renewed,  
And appetite unappeased.  
Nathless I could teach a shorter plan  
To win that wisdom you crave,  
That lore that is seldom attained by man  
From the cradle down to the grave.

*Hugo*

Such lore I had rather do without,  
It hath nothing mystic nor awful  
In my eye. Nay, I despise and doubt  
The arts that are termed unlawful ;  
'Twixt science and magic the lines lie plain  
I shall never wittingly pass it ;  
There is now no compact between us twain.

*Orion*

But an understanding tacit.  
You have prospered much since the day we met ;  
You were then a landless knight ;  
You now have honour and wealth, and yet  
I never can serve you right.

*Hugo*

Enough ; we will start this very day,  
Thurston, Eric and I,  
And the baffled visions will pass away,  
And the restless fires will die.

*Orion*

Till the fuel expires that feeds those fires  
They smoulder and live unspent ;  
Give a mortal all that his heart desires,  
He is less than ever content.

*Scene*—A CLIFF ON THE BRETON COAST,  
OVERHANGING THE SEA

HUGO.

*Hugo*

Down drops the red sun ; through the gloaming  
They burst—raging waves of the sea  
Foaming out their own shame—ever foaming  
Their leprosy up with fierce glee ;  
Flung back from the stone, snowy fountains  
Of feathery flakes, scarcely flag  
Where, shock after shock, the green mountains  
Explode on the iron-grey crag.

The salt spray with ceaseless commotion  
Leaps round me. I sit on the verge  
Of the cliff—'twixt the earth and the ocean—  
With feet overhanging the surge.  
In thy grandeur, O sea ! we acknowledge,  
In thy fairness, O earth ! we confess,  
Hidden truths that are taught in no college,  
Hidden songs that no parchments express.

Were they wise in their own generations,  
Those sages and sagas of old ?  
They have passed ; o'er their names and their  
nations  
Time's billows have silently rolled ;  
They have passed, leaving little to their children,  
Save histories of a truth far from strict ;  
Or theories more vague and bewildering,  
Since three out of four contradict.

Lost labour ! vain book-worms have sat in  
The halls of dull pedants who teach  
Strange tongues, the dead lore of the Latin,  
The scroll that is god-like and Greek :

Have wasted life's springtide in learning  
Things long ago learnt all in vain ;  
They are slow, very slow, in discerning  
That book-lore and wisdom are twain.

Pale shades of a creed that was mythic,  
By time or by truth overcome,  
Your Delphian temples and Pythic  
Are ruins deserted and dumb ;  
Your Muses are hushed, and your Graces  
Are bruised and defaced ; and your gods,  
Enshrined and enthroned in high places  
No longer, are powerless as clods ;

By forest and streamlet, where glistened  
Fair feet of the Naiads that skimmed  
The shallows ; where the Oreads listened,  
Rose-lipped, amber-haired, marble-limbed,  
No lithe forms disport in the river,  
No sweet faces peer through the boughs,  
Elms and beeches were silent for ever,  
Ever silent the bright water flows.

(Were they duller or wiser than we are,  
Those heathens of old ? Who shall say ?  
Worse or better ? Thy wisdom, O 'Thea  
Glaucopis,' was wise in thy day ;  
And the false gods alluring to evil,  
That swayed reckless votaries then,  
Were slain to no purpose ; they revel  
Recrowned in the hearts of us men.)

Dead priests of Osiris, and Isis,  
And Apis ! that mystical lore,  
Like a nightmare, conceived in a crisis  
Of fever, is studied no more ;  
Dead Magian ! yon star-troop that spangles  
The arch of yon firmament vast  
Looks calm, like a host of white angels,  
On dry dust of votaries past.

On seas unexplored can the ship shun  
Sunk rocks ? Can man fathom life's links.  
Past or future, unsolved by Egyptian  
Or Theban, unspoken by Sphinx ?  
The riddle remains still unravelled,  
By students consuming night oil.  
O earth ! we have toiled, we have travailed :  
How long shall we travail and toil ?

How long ? The short life that fools reckon  
So sweet, by how much is it higher  
Than brute life ? the false gods still beckon,  
And man, through the dust and the mire,  
Toils onward, as toils the dull bullock,  
Unreasoning, brutish, and blind,  
With Ashtaroth, Mammon, and Moloch  
In front, and Alecto behind.

The wise one of earth, the Chaldæan,  
Serves folly in wisdom's disguise ;  
And the sensual Epicuræan,  
Though grosser, is hardly less wise ;  
'Twixt the former, half pedant, half pagan,  
And the latter, half sow and half sloth,  
We halt, choose Astarté or Dagon,  
Or sacrifice freely to both.

With our reason that seeks to disparage,  
Brute instinct it fails to subdue ;  
With our false illegitimate courage,  
Our sophistry, vain and untrue ;  
Our hopes, that ascend so and fall so,  
Our passions, fierce hates and hot loves,  
We are wise (aye, the snake is wise also)—  
Wise as serpents, *not* harmless as doves.

Some flashes, like faint sparks from heaven,  
Come rarely with rushing of wings ;  
We are conscious at times we have striven,  
Though seldom, to grasp better things ;

These pass, leaving hearts that have faltered,  
Good angels with faces estranged,  
And the skin of the Ethiop unaltered,  
And the spots of the leopard unchanged.

O earth ! pleasant earth ! have we hankered  
To gather thy flowers and thy fruits ?  
The roses are withered, and cankered  
The lilies, and barren the roots  
Of the fig-tree, the vine, the wild olive,  
Sharp thorns and sad thistles that yield  
Fierce harvest—and so *we* live, and so live  
The perishing beasts of the field.

And withal we are conscious of evil  
And good—of the spirit and the clod,  
Of the power in our hearts of a devil,  
Of the power in our souls of a God  
Whose commandments are graven in no cypher,  
But clear as His sun—from our youth  
One at least we have cherished—‘ An eye for  
An eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’

O man ! of thy Maker the image ;  
To passion, to pride, or to wealth,  
Sworn bondsmen, from dull youth to dim age,  
Thy portion, the fire or the filth,  
Dross seeking ; dead pleasure’s death-rattle  
Thy memories’ happiest song  
And thy highest hope—scarce a drawn battle  
With dark desperation. How long ?

Roar louder ! leap higher ! ye surf-beds,  
And sprinkle your foam on the furze ;  
Bring the dreams that brought sleep to our turf-  
beds,  
To camps of our long ago years,



With the flashing and sparkling of broadswords,  
 With the tossing of banners and spears,  
 With the trampling of hard hoofs on hard swards,  
 With the mingling of trumpets and cheers.

The gale has gone down ; yet outlasting  
 The gale, raging waves of the sea  
 Casting up their own foam, ever casting  
 Their leprosy up with wild glee,  
 Still storm ; so in rashness and rudeness  
 Man storms through the days of his grace ;  
 Yet man cannot fathom God's goodness,  
 Exceeding God's infinite space ;

And coldly and calmly and purely  
 Grey rock and green hillock lie white  
 In star-shine dream-laden—so surely  
 Night cometh—so cometh the night  
 When we, too, at peace with our neighbour,  
 May sleep where God's hillocks are piled,  
 Thanking Him for a rest from day's labour,  
 And a sleep like the sleep of a child !

*Scene*—THE CASTLE IN NORMANDY

THORA *working at embroidery*, ELSPETH *spinning*.

*Thora (sings)*

WE severed in Autumn early,  
 Ere the earth was torn by the plough ;  
 The wheat and the oats and the barley  
 Are ripe for the harvest now.  
 We sundered one misty morning  
 Ere the hills were dimmed by the rain ;  
 Through the flowers those hills adorning—  
 Thou comest not back again.

My heart is heavy and weary  
With the weight of a weary soul ;  
The midday glare grows dreary,  
And dreary the midnight scroll.  
The corn-stalks sigh for the sickle,  
'Neath the load of their golden grain ;  
I sigh for a mate more fickle—  
Thou comest not back again.

The warm sun setteth and riseth,  
The night bringeth moistening dew,  
But the soul that longeth forgetteth  
The warmth and the moisture too.  
In the hot sun rising and setting  
There is naught save feverish pain ;  
There are tears in the night-dews wetting—  
Thou comest not back again.

Thy voice in mine ear still mingles  
With the voices of whispering trees,  
Thy kiss on my cheek still tingles  
At each kiss of the summer breeze.  
While dreams of the past are thronging  
For substance of shades in vain,  
I am waiting, watching and longing—  
Thou comest not back again.

Waiting and watching ever,  
Longing and lingering yet,  
Leaves rustle and corn-stalks quiver,  
Winds murmur and waters fret.  
No answer they bring, no greeting,  
No speech, save that sad refrain,  
Nor voice, save an echo repeating—  
He cometh not back again.

### *Elspeth*

Thine eldest sister is wedded to Max ;  
With Biorn, Hilda hath cast her lot.

If the husbands vanished, and left no tracks,  
Would the wives have cause for sorrow, I wot ?

### *Thora*

How well I remember that dreary ride ;  
How I sighed for the lands of ice and snow,  
In the trackless wastes of the desert wide,  
With the sun o'erhead and the sand below ;  
'Neath the scanty shades of the feathery palms,  
How I sighed for the forest of sheltering firs,  
Whose shadows environed the Danish farms  
Where I sang and sported in childish years.  
On the fourteenth day of our pilgrimage  
We stayed at the foot of a sandhill high ;  
Our fevered thirst we could scarce assuage  
At the brackish well that was nearly dry ;

And the hot sun rose, and the hot sun set,  
And we rode all the day through a desert land,  
And we camped where the lake and the river met,  
On sedge and shingle and shining sand :  
Enfolded in Hugo's cloak I slept,  
Or watched the stars while I lay awake ;  
And close to our feet the staghound crept,  
And the horses were grazing beside the lake ;  
Now we own castles and serving-men,  
Lands and revenues. What of that ?  
Hugo the Norman was kinder then,  
And happier was Thora of Armorat.

### *Elspeth*

Nay, I warned thee with Norman sails unfurled  
Above our heads, when we wished thee joy,  
That men are the same all over the world ;  
They will worship only the newest toy ;  
Yet Hugo is kind and constant too,  
Though somewhat given to studies of late ;

Biorn is sottish, and Max untrue,  
And worse than thine is thy sister's fate.  
But a shadow darkens the chamber door.

*Enter Thurston.*

*Thurston*

'Tis I, Lady Thora ; our lord is near  
My horse being fresher, I rode before ;  
Both he and Eric will soon be here.

*Thora*

Good Thurston, give me your hand. You are  
Most welcome. What has delayed you thus ?

*Thurston*

Both by sea and land we have travelled far,  
Yet little of note has happened to us—  
We were wrecked on the shores of Brittany,  
Near the coast of Morbihan iron-bound ;  
The rocks were steep and the surf ran high,  
Thy kinsman, Eric, was well-nigh drowned.  
By a swarm of knaves we were next beset,  
Who took us for corsairs ; then released  
By a Breton count, whose name I forget.  
Now, I go, by your leave, to tend my beast.  
*[He goes out.]*

*Elsbeth*

That man is rude and forward of speech :  
My ears are good, though my sight grows dim.

*Thora*

Thurston is faithful. Thou canst not teach  
Courtly nor servile manners to him.

*Scene.—THE CASTLE HALL*

THURSTON, RALPH, EUSTACE, and other followers of  
HUGO seated at a long table. HAROLD seated  
apart.

*Thurston*

WHO is that stranger, dark and tall,  
On the wooden settle next to the wall ;  
Mountebank, pilgrim, or wandering bard ?

*Eustace*

To define his calling is somewhat hard ;  
Lady Thora has taken him by the hand  
Because he has come from the Holy Land.  
Pilgrims and palmers are all the rage  
With her, since she shared in that pilgrimage  
With Hugo. The stranger came yesterday,  
And would have gone on, but she bade him stay.  
Besides, he sings in the Danish tongue  
The songs she has heard in her childhood sung.  
That 's all I know of him, good or bad ;  
In my opinion he 's somewhat mad.  
You must raise your voice if you speak with him.  
And he answers as though his senses were dim.

*Thurston (to Harold)*

Good-morrow, sir stranger.

*Harold*

Good-morrow, friend.

*Thurston*

Where do you come from ? and whither wend ?

*Harold*

I have travelled of late with the setting sun  
At my back ; and as soon as my task is done  
I purpose to turn my face to the north—  
Yet we know not what a day may bring forth.

*Thurston*

Indeed we don't.  
(*To Eustace, aside.*) Nay, I know him now  
By that ugly scar that crosses his brow ;  
And the less we say to him the better ;  
Your judgment is right to the very letter—  
The man is mad.

*Eustace*

But harmless, I think ;  
He eats but little, eschews strong drink,  
And only speaks when spoken to first.

*Thurston*

Harmless or not, he was once the worst  
And bitterest foe Lord Hugo had ;  
And yet his story is somewhat sad.

*Eustace*

May I hear it ?

*Thurston*

Nay, I never reveal  
What concerns me not. Our lord may conceal  
Or divulge at pleasure his own affairs,—  
Not even his comrade Eric shares  
His secrets ; though Eric thinks him wise,  
Which is more than I do, for I despise  
That foolish science he learnt in Rome.  
He dreams and mopes when he sits at home,  
And now he's not much better abroad ;  
'Tis hard to follow so tame a lord.  
'Twixt us two, he won't be worth a rush  
If he will persist in his studies—

*Eustace*

Hush !

Ralph has persuaded our guest to sing.

*Thurston*

I have known the day when his voice would ring  
Till the rafters echoed.

*Eustace*

'Tis pleasant still,  
Though far too feeble this hall to fill.

*Harold (sings)*

On the current, where the wide  
Windings of the river  
Eddy to the North Sea tide,  
Shall I in my shallop glide,  
As I have done at her side ?  
Never ! never ! never !

In the forest, where the firs,  
Pines and larches quiver  
To the northern breeze that stirs,  
Shall my lips be pressed to hers,  
As they were in bygone years ?  
Never ! never ! never !

In the battle on the plain,  
Where the lance-shafts shiver,  
And the sword-strokes fall like rain,  
Shall I bear her scarf again  
As I have done ?—not in vain.  
Never ! never ! never !

In a fairer, brighter land,  
Where the saints rest ever,  
Shall I once more see her stand,  
White, amidst a white-robed band,  
Harp and palm-branch in her hand ?  
Never ! never ! never !

*Scene—THE SAME*

EUSTACE, THURSTON, and followers of HUGO.

HAROLD

*Enter, by the hall door, Hugo, Eric, and Thora.*

*Eustace (and others standing up)*

WELCOME, Lord Hugo !

*Hugo*

Welcome or not,

Thanks for your greeting all.

Ha, Eustace ! what complaints hast thou got ?

What grievances to recall ?

*Eustace*

Count William came with a numerous band,

Ere the snows began to fall,

And slew a buck on your lordship's land,

Within a league of the wall.

*Hugo*

Count William has done to us no more

Than we to him. In his vineyard

Last summer, or later may be, a boar

Was slaughtered by Thurston's whinyard.

*Thurston*

Aye, Hugo ! But Wilham kept the buck

I will wager marks a score,

Though the tale is new to me ; and, worse luck,

You made me give back the boar.

*Harold (advancing)*

Lord Hugo !



*Hugo*

What ! Art thou living yet ?

I scarcely knew thee, Sir Dane !  
And 'tis not so very long since we met.

*Harold*

'Twill be long ere we meet again (*gives a letter*) ;  
This letter was traced by one now dead  
In the Holy Land ; and I  
Must wait till his dying request is read,  
And in his name ask the reply.

*Thora (aside)*

Who is that stranger, Hugo ?

*Hugo*

By birth

He is a countryman of thine,  
Thora. What writing is this on earth ?  
I can scarce decipher a line.

*Harold*

The pen in the clutch of death works ill.

*Hugo*

Nay, I read now ; the letters run  
More clearly.

*Harold*

Wilt grant the request ?

*Hugo*

I will.

*Harold*

Enough ! Then my task is done. (*He holds out  
his hand.*)  
Hugo, I go to a far-off land,  
Wilt thou say, ' God speed thee ! ' now ?

*Hugo*

Sir Harold, I cannot take thy hand,  
Because of my ancient vow.

*Harold*

Farewell, then.

*Thora*

Friend, till the morning wait.  
On so wild a night as this  
Thou shalt not go from my husband's gate,  
The path thou wilt surely miss.

*Harold*

I go. Kind lady, some future day  
Thy care will requited be.

*Thora*

Speak, Hugo, speak.

*Hugo*

He may go or stay,  
It matters little to me.

[*Harold goes out.*]

*Thora*

Husband, that man is ill and weak ;  
On foot he goes and alone  
Through a barren moor in a night-storm bleak.

*Eric*

Now I wonder where he has gone !

*Hugo*

Indeed, I have not the least idea ;  
The man is certainly mad.  
He wedded my sister Dorothea,  
And used her cruelly bad.  
He was once my firmest and surest friend,  
And once my deadliest foe ;  
But hate and friendship both find their end—  
Now I heed not where he may go.

*Scene*—A CHAMBER IN THE CASTLE

HUGO, THORA, and ERIC.

*Hugo*

THAT letter that came from Palestine,  
By the hands of yon wandering Dane,  
Will cost me a pilgrimage to the Rhine.

*Thora*

Wilt thou travel so soon again ?

*Hugo*

I can scarce refuse the dying request  
Of my comrade, Baldwin, now ;  
His bones are dust. May his soul find rest !  
He once made a foolish vow,  
That at Englemehr, 'neath the watchful care  
Of the Abbess, his child should stay,  
For a season at least. To escort her there  
I must start at the break of day.

*Thora*

Is it Agatha that goes, or Clare ?

*Hugo*

Nay, Clare is dwelling in Spain  
With her spouse.

*Thora*

'Tis Agatha. She is fair,  
I am told ; but giddy and vain.

*Eric*

Some musty tales on my memory grow  
Concerning Count Baldwin's vow ;  
Thou knew'st his daughter ?

*Hugo*

Aye, years ago.

I should scarcely know her now.  
It seems, when her father's vow was made,  
She was taken sorely ill ;  
Then he travelled, and on his return was stayed ;  
He could never his oath fulfil.

*Eric*

If rightly I 've heard, 'twas Agatha  
That fled with some Danish knight—  
I forget the name.

*Hugo*

Nay, she fled not far,  
She returned again that night.

*Thora*

For a nun, I fear, she is too self-willed.

*Hugo*

That is no affair of mine.  
My task is over, my word fulfilled,  
Should I bring her safe to the Rhine.  
Come, Thora, sing.

*Thora*

Nay, I cannot sing,  
Nor would I now if I could.  
Sing thou.

*Hugo*

I will, though my voice should bring  
No sound save a discord rude.  
(Sings.)  
Where the storm in its wrath hath lighted,  
The pine lies low in the dust ;  
And the corn is withered and blighted,  
Where the fields are red with the rust ;

Falls the black frost, nipping and killing,  
Where its petals the violet rears,  
And the wind, though tempered, is chilling  
To the lamb despoiled by the shears.

The strong in their strength are shaken,  
The wise in their wisdom fall ;  
And the bloom of beauty is taken—  
Strength, wisdom, beauty, and all ;  
They vanish, their lot fulfilling,  
Their doom approaches and nears,  
But the wind, though tempered, is chilling  
To the lamb despoiled by the shears.

'Tis the will of a Great Creator,  
He is wise, His will must be done,  
And it cometh sooner or later ;  
And one shall be taken, and one  
Shall be left here, toiling and tilling,  
In this vale of sorrows and tears,  
Where the wind, though tempered, is chilling  
To the lamb despoiled by the shears.

Tell me, mine own one, tell me,  
The shadows of life and the fears  
Shall neither daunt me nor quell me  
While I can avert thy tears :  
Dost thou shrink, as I shrink, unwilling  
To realise lonely years ?  
Since the wind, though tempered, is chilling  
To the lamb despoiled by the shears.

*Enter Henry.*

*Henry*

My lord, Father Luke craves audience straight,  
He has come on foot from the chapel ;  
Some stranger perished beside his gate  
When the dawn began to dapple.

*Scene*—A CHAPEL NOT VERY FAR FROM  
HUGO'S CASTLE

HUGO, ERIC, and two Monks (LUKE and HUBERT).  
*The dead body of HAROLD.*

*Luke*

WHEN the dawn was breaking,  
Came a faint sound, waking  
Hubert and myself ; we hurried to the door,  
Found the stranger lying  
At the threshold, dying.  
Somewhere have I seen a face like his before.

*Hugo*

Harold he is hight.  
Only yesternight  
From our gates he wandered, in the driving hail ;  
Well his face I know,  
Both as friend and foe ;  
Of my followers only Thurston knows his tale.

*Luke*

Few the words he said,  
Faint the signs he made,  
Twice or thrice he groaned ; quoth Hubert, 'Thou  
hast sinned.  
This is retribution,  
Seek for absolution ;  
Answer me—then cast thy sorrows to the wind.  
Do their voices reach thee,  
Friends who failed to teach thee,  
In thine earlier days, to sunder right from wrong ?  
Charges 'gainst thee cited,  
Cares all unrequited,

Counsels spurned and slighted—do they press and throng ? ’

But he shook his head.

‘ ’Tis not so,’ he said ;

‘ They will scarce reproach me who reproached of yore.

If their counsels good,

Rashly I withstood ;

Having suffered longer, I have suffered more.’

‘ Do their curses stun thee ?

Foes who failed to shun thee,

Stricken by rash vengeance, in some wild career.

As the barbed arrow

Cleaveth bone and marrow,

From those chambers narrow—do they pierce thine ear ? ’

And he made reply,

Laughing bitterly,

‘ Did I fear them living—shall I fear them dead ?

Blood that I have spilt

Leaveth little guilt ;

On the hand it resteth, scarcely on the head.’

‘ Is there one whom thou

Mayst have wronged ere now,

Since remorse so sorely weigheth down thine heart ?

By some saint in heaven,

Sanctified and shriven,

Wouldst thou be forgiven ere thy soul depart ? ’

Not a word he said,

But he bowed his head

Till his temples rested on the chilly sods ;

And we heard him groan—

‘ Ah ! mine own, mine own !

If I had thy pardon I might ask for God’s.’

Hubert raised him slowly.

Sunrise, faint and holy,

Lit the dead face, placid as a child’s might be.

May the troubled spirit,  
Through Christ's saving merit,  
Peace and rest inherit. Thus we sent for thee.

*Hugo*

God o'erruleth fate.  
I had cause for hate :  
In this very chapel, years back, proud and strong,  
Joined by priestly vows,  
He became the spouse  
Of my youngest sister to her bitter wrong.  
And he wrought her woe,  
Making me his foe ;  
Not alone unfaithful—brutal, too, was he.  
She had scarce been dead  
Three months, ere he fled  
With Count Baldwin's daughter, then betrothed to  
me.

Fortune straight forsook him,  
Vengeance overtook him ;  
Heavy crimes will bring down heavy punishment.  
All his strength was shattered,  
Even his wits were scattered,  
Half deranged, half crippled, wandering he went.  
We are unforgiving  
While our foes are living ;  
Yet his retribution weighed so heavily,  
That I feel remorse  
Gazing on his corpse,  
For my rudeness when he left our gates to die.  
And his grave shall be  
'Neath the chestnut tree,  
Where he met my sister many years ago ;  
Leave that tress of hair  
On his bosom there—  
Wrap the cerecloth round him ! Eric, let us go.



*Scene—A ROOM IN THE CASTLE**HUGO and ERIC. Early morning.**Hugo*

THE morn is fair, the weary miles  
 Will shorten 'neath the summer's wiles ;  
 Pomona in the orchard smiles,  
     And in the meadow, Flora ;  
 And I have roused a chosen band  
 For escort through the troubled land ;  
 And shaken Elspeth by the hand,  
     And said farewell to Thora.  
 Comrade and kinsman—for thou art  
 Comrade and kin to me—we part  
 Ere nightfall, if at once we start,  
     We gain the dead Count's castle.  
 The roads are fair, the days are fine,  
 Ere long I hope to reach the Rhine.  
 Forsooth, no friend to me or mine  
     Is that same Abbot Basil ;  
 I thought he wronged us by his greed.  
 My father signed a foolish deed  
 For lack of gold in time of need,  
     And thus our lands went by us ;  
 Yet wrong on our side may have been :  
 As far as my will goes, I ween,  
 'Tis past, the grudge that lay between  
     Us twain. Men call him pious—  
 And I have prospered much since then,  
 And gained for one lost acre ten ;  
 And even the ancient house and glen  
     Re-bought with purchase-money.  
 He, too, is wealthy ; he has got  
 By churchly rights a fertile spot,  
 A land of corn and wine, I wot,  
     A land of milk and honey.

Now, Eric, change thy plans and ride  
With us, thou hast no ties, no bride.

*Eric*

Nay, ties I have, and time and tide,  
Thou knowest, wait for no man ;  
And I go north ; God's blessing shuns  
The dwellings of forgetful sons,  
That proverb he may read who runs,  
In Christian lore or Roman.  
My good old mother she hath heard,  
For twelve long months, from me no word ;  
At thought of her my heart is stirred,  
And even mine eyes grow moister.  
Greet Ursula from me ; her fame  
Is known to all. A nobler dame,  
Since days of Clovis, ne'er became  
The inmate of a cloister.  
Our paths diverge, yet we may go  
Together for a league or so ;  
I, too, will join thy band below  
When thou thy bugle windest.

[*Eric goes out.*]

*Hugo*

From weaknesses we stand afar,  
On us unpleasantly they jar ;  
And yet the stoutest-hearted are  
The gentlest and the kindest.  
My mother loved me tenderly ;  
Alas ! her only son was I.  
I shuddered, but my lids were dry,  
By death made orphan newly.  
A braver man than me, I swear,  
Who never comprehended fear,  
Scarce names his mother, and the tear,  
Unbidden, springs, unruly.

*Scene*—A ROAD ON THE NORMAN FRONTIERS

HUGO, AGATHA, ORION, THURSTON, *and armed attendants riding slowly.*

*Agatha*

SIR Knight, what makes you so grave and glum ?  
At times I fear you are deaf or dumb,  
Or both.

*Hugo*

And yet, should I speak the truth,  
There is little in common 'twixt us, forsooth,  
You would think me duller, and still more vain,  
If I uttered the thoughts that fill my brain ;  
Since the matters with which my mind is laden  
Would scarcely serve to amuse a maiden.

*Agatha*

I am so foolish, and you are so wise,  
'Tis the meaning your words so ill disguise.  
Alas ! my prospects are sad enough :  
I had rather listen to speeches rough,  
Than muse and meditate silently  
On the coming loss of my liberty.  
Sad hope to me can my future bring,  
Yet, while I may, I would prattle and sing,  
Though it only were to try and assuage  
The dreariness of my pilgrimage.

*Hugo*

Prattle and sing to your heart's content,  
And none will offer impediment.

*Agatha (sings)*

We were playmates in childhood, my sister and I,  
Whose playtime with childhood is done ;  
Through thickets where briar and bramble grew  
high,  
Barefooted I 've oft seen her run.

I've known her, when mists on the moorland hung  
white,

Bareheaded past nightfall remain ;  
She has followed a landless and penniless knight  
Through battles and sieges in Spain.

But I pulled the flower, and shrank from the thorn,  
Sought the sunshine, and fled from the mist ;  
My sister was born to face hardship with scorn—  
I was born to be fondled and kissed.

*Hugo (aside)*

She has a sweet voice.

*Orion*

And a sweet face too—  
Be candid for once, and give her her due.

*Agatha*

Your face grows longer, and still more long,  
Sir Scholar ! how did you like my song ?

*Hugo*

I thought it rather a silly one.

*Agatha*

You are far from a pleasant companion.

*Scene*—AN APARTMENT IN A WAYSIDE INN

HUGO and AGATHA. *Evening.*

*Hugo*

I WILL leave you now—we have talked enough,  
And for one so tenderly reared and nursed  
This journey is wearisome, perhaps, and rough.

*Agatha*

Will you not finish your story first ?

*Hugo*

I repent me that I began it now,  
'Tis a dismal tale for a maiden's ears ;  
Your cheek is pale already, your brow  
Is sad, and your eyes are moist with tears.

*Agatha*

It may be thus, I am lightly vexed,  
But the tears will lightly come and go :  
I can cry one moment and laugh the next,  
Yet I have seen terrors, as well you know.  
I remember that flight through moss and fern,  
The moonlit shadows, the hoofs that rolled  
In fierce pursuit, and the ending stern,  
And the hawk that left his prey on the wold.

*Hugo*

I have sorrowed since that I left you there :  
Your friends were close behind on the heath,  
Though not so close as I thought they were.  
(*Aside.*) Now I will not tell her of Harold's death.

*Agatha*

'Tis true, I was justly punished, and men,  
As a rule, of pity have little share :  
Had I died, you had cared but little then.

*Hugo*

But little then, yet now I should care  
More than you think for. Now, good-night  
Tears still ? Ere I leave you, child, alone,  
Must I dry your cheeks ?

*Agatha*

Nay, I am not quite  
Such a child but what I can dry my own.  
[*Hugo goes out. Agatha retires.*]

*Orion (singing outside the window of  
Agatha's chamber)*

'Neath the stems with blossoms laden,  
'Neath the tendrils curling,  
I, thy servant, sing, O maiden !  
I, thy slave, O darling !  
Lo ! the shaft that slew the red deer,  
At the elk may fly too,  
Spare them not ! The dead are dead, dear,  
Let the living die too.

Where the wiles of serpent mingle,  
And the looks of dove lie,  
Where small hands in strong hands tingle,  
Loving eyes meet lovely ;  
Where the harder natures soften,  
And the softer harden—  
Certes ! such things have been often  
Since we left Eve's garden.

Sweeter follies herald sadder  
Sins—look not too closely ;  
Tongue of asp and tooth of adder  
Under leaf of rose lie.  
Warned, advised in vain, abandon  
Warning and advice too,  
Let the child lay wilful hand on  
Den of cockatrice too.

I, thy servant, or thy master,  
One or both—no matter ;  
If the former—firmer, faster,  
Surer still the latter—  
Lull thee, soothe thee, with my singing,  
Bid thee sleep, and ponder  
On my lullabies, still ringing  
Through thy dreamland yonder.

*Scene*—A WOODED RISING GROUND, NEAR  
THE RHINE

HUGO and AGATHA resting under the trees. THURSTON,  
EUSTACE, and followers a little apart. ORION  
Noonday. *The Towers of the Convent in the distance.*

*Agatha*

I sit on the greensward, and hear the bird sing,  
'Mid the thickets where scarlet and white blossoms  
cling ;  
And beyond the sweet uplands all golden with  
flower,  
It looms in the distance, the grey convent tower.  
And the emerald earth and the sapphire-hued sky  
Keep telling me ever my spring has gone by ;  
Ah ! spring premature, they are tolling thy knell,  
In the wind's soft adieu, in the bird's sweet farewell.  
Oh ! why is the greensward with garlands so gay,  
That I quail at the sight of my prison-house grey  
Oh ! why is the bird's note so joyous and clear ?  
The caged bird must pine in a cage doubly drear.

*Hugo*

May the lances of Dagobert harry their house,  
If they coax or intimidate thee to take vows ;  
May the freebooters pillage their shrines, should  
they dare  
Touch with their scissors thy glittering hair.  
Our short and sweet journey now draws to an end,  
And homeward my sorrowful way I must wend ;  
O fair one ! O loved one ! I would I were free  
To squander my life in the greenwood with thee.

*Orion (aside)*

Ho ! seeker of knowledge, so grave and so wise,  
Touch her soft curl again—look again in her eyes ;

Forget for the nonce musty parchments, and learn  
How the slow pulse may quicken—the cold blood  
may burn.

Ho ! fair, fickle maiden, so blooming and shy !  
The old love is dead, let the old promise die !  
Thou dost well, thou dost wise, take the word of  
Orion,  
' A living dog always before a dead lion ! '

*Thurston*

Ye varlets, I would I knew which of ye burst  
Our wine-skin—what, ho ! must I perish with  
thirst !

Go, Henry, thou hast a glib tongue, go and ask  
Thy lord to send Ralph to yon inn for a flask.

*Henry*

Nay, Thurston, not so ; I decline to disturb  
Our lord for the present ; go thou, or else curb  
Thy thirst, or drink water, as I do.

*Thurston*

Thou knave  
Of a page, dost thou wish me the colic to have ?

*Orion (aside)*

That clown is a thoroughbred Saxon. He thinks  
With pleasure on naught save hard blows and strong  
drinks ;

In hell he will scarce go athirst if once given  
An inkling of any good liquors in heaven.

*Hugo*

Our Pontiff to manhood at Englemehr grew,  
The priests there are many, the nuns are but few.  
I love not the Abbot—'tis needless to tell  
My reason ; but all of the Abbess speak well.



*Agatha*

Through vineyards and cornfields beneath us, the  
Rhine  
Spreads and winds, silver-white, in the merry  
sunshine ;  
And the air, overcharged with a subtle perfume,  
Grows faint from the essence of manifold bloom.

*Hugo*

And the tinkling of bells, and the bleating of sheep,  
And the chaunt from the fields, where the labourers  
reap  
The earlier harvest, comes faint on the breeze,  
That whispers so faintly in hedgerows and trees.

*Orion*

And a waggon wends slow to those turrets and  
spires,  
To feed the fat monks and the corpulent friars ;  
It carries the corn, and the oil, and the wine,  
The honey and milk from the shores of the Rhine.  
The oxen are weary and spent with their load ;  
They pause, but the driver doth recklessly goad  
Up yon steep, flinty rise ; they have staggered and  
reeled.  
Even devils may pity dumb beasts of the field.

*Agatha (sings)*

O days and years departed,  
Vain hopes, vain fears that smarted.  
I turn to you, sad-hearted—  
I turn to you in tears !  
Your daily sun shone brightly,  
Your happy dreams came nightly,  
Flowers bloomed and birds sang lightly,  
Through all your hopes and fears !  
You halted not, nor tarried,  
Your hopes have all miscarried,

And even your fears are buried,  
    Since fear with hope must die.  
You halted not, but hasted,  
And flew past, childhood wasted,  
And girlhood scarcely tasted,  
    Now womanhood is nigh.

Yet I forgive your wronging,  
Dead seasons round me thronging,  
With yearning and with longing,  
    I call your bitters sweet.  
Vain longing, and vain yearning,  
There now is no returning ;  
O beating heart and burning,  
    Forget to burn and beat !

O childish suns and showers,  
O girlish thorns and flowers,  
O fruitless days and hours,  
    O groundless hopes and fears :  
The birds still chirp and twitter.  
And still the sunbeams glitter :  
O barren years and bitter,  
    O bitter, barren years !

*Scene*—THE SUMMIT OF A BURNING  
MOUNTAIN

*Night. A terrific storm. ORION (undisguised).*

*Orion (sings)*

FROM fathomless depths of abysses  
    Where fires unquenchable burst,  
From the blackness of darkness, where hisses  
    The brood of the serpent accursed ;  
From shrines, where the hymns are the weeping  
    And wailing and gnashing of teeth,  
Where the palm is the pang never sleeping,  
    Where the worm never dying is the wreath ;

Where all fruits save wickedness wither,  
 Whence naught save despair can be gleaned—  
 Come hither ! come hither ! come hither !  
 Fall'n angel, fell sprite, and foul fiend.  
 Come hither ! the bands are all broken  
 And loosed, in hell's innermost womb,  
 When the spell unpronounceable spoken  
 Divides the unspeakable gloom.

*Evil Spirits approach. The storm increases.*

*Evil Spirits (singing)*

We hear thee, we seek thee, on pinions  
 That darken the shades of the shade ;  
 O Prince of the Air, with dominions  
 Encompassed, with powers arrayed,  
 With majesty clothed as a garment,  
 Begirt with a shadowy shine,  
 Whose feet scorch the hill-tops that are meant  
 As footstools for thee and for thine.

*Orion (sings)*

How it swells through each pause of the thunder,  
 And mounts through each lull of the gust,  
 Through the crashing of crags torn asunder,  
 And the hurtling of trees in the dust ;  
 With a chorus of loud lamentations,  
 With its dreary and hopeless refrain !  
 'Tis the cry of all tongues and all nations,  
 That suffer and shudder in vain.

*Evil Spirits (singing)*

'Tis the cry of all tongues and all nations ;  
 Our song shall chime in with their strain .  
 Lost spirits blend their wild exultations  
 With the sighing of mortals in pain.

*Orion (sings)*

With just light enough to see sorrows  
In this world, and terrors beyond,  
'Twixt the day's bitter pangs and the morrow's  
Dread doubts, to despair and despond,  
Man lingers through toils unavailing  
For blessings that baffle his grasp ;  
To his cradle he comes with a wailing,  
He goes to his grave with a gasp.

*Evil Spirits (singing)*

His birth is a weeping and wailing,  
His death is a groan and a gasp ;  
O'er the seed of the woman prevailing,  
Thus triumphs the seed of the asp.

*Scene—CHAMBER OF A WAYSIDE INN*

HUGO *sitting alone. Evening.*

*Hugo*

AND now the parting is over,  
The parting should end the pain ;  
And the restless heart may recover,  
And so may the troubled brain.  
I am sitting within the chamber  
Whose windows look on the porch,  
Where the roses cluster and clamber ;  
We halted here on our march  
With her to the convent going,  
And now I go back alone ;  
Ye roses, budding and blowing,  
Ye heed not though she is flown.

I remember the girlish gesture,  
The sportive and childlike grace,  
With which she crumpled and pressed your  
Rose-leaves to her rose-hued face.

Shall I think on her ways hereafter—  
On those flashes of mirth and grief,  
On that April of tears and laughter,  
On our parting, bitterly brief ?

I remember the bell at sunrise,  
That sounded so solemnly.  
Bidding monk, and prelate, and nun rise ;  
I rose ere the sun was high.  
Down the long, dark, dismal passage,  
To the door of her resting-place  
I went, on a farewell message,  
I trod with a stealthy pace.  
There was no one there to see us  
When she opened her chamber door.  
' *Miserere, mei Deus,*'  
Rang faint from the convent choir.

I remember the dark and narrow  
And scantily furnished room ;  
And the gleam, like a golden arrow,  
The gleam that lighted the gloom.  
One couch, one seat, and one table,  
One window, and only one—  
It stands in the eastern gable,  
It faces the rising sun ;  
One ray shot through it, and one light  
On doorway and threshold played.  
She stood within in the sunlight,  
I stood without in the shade.

I remember that bright form under  
The sheen of that slanting ray.  
I spoke—' For life we must sunder,  
Let us sunder without delay.  
Let us sever without preamble,  
As brother and sister part,  
For the sake of one pleasant ramble,  
That will live in at least one heart.'

Still the choir in my ears rang faintly,  
In the distance dying away,  
Sweetly, and sadly, and saintly,  
Through arch and corridor grey !  
And thus we parted for ever,  
Between the shade and the shine ;  
Not as brother and sister sever—  
I fondled her hands in mine.  
Still the choir in my ears rang deadened  
And dulled, though audible yet ;  
And she reddened, and paled, and reddened—  
Her lashes and lids grew wet.  
Not as brother severs from sister,  
My lips clung fast to her lips ;  
She shivered and shrank when I kissed her.  
On the sunbeam drooped the eclipse.

I remember little of the parting  
With the Abbot, down by the gate,  
My men were eager for starting ;  
I think he pressed me to wait.  
From the lands where convent and glebe lie,  
From manors, and church's right,  
Where I fought temptation so feebly,  
I too felt eager for flight.  
Alas ! the parting is over :  
The parting, but not the pain—  
Oh ! sweet was the purple clover,  
And sweet was the yellow grain ;  
And sweet were the woody hollows  
On the summery Rhineward track ;  
But a winter untimely swallows  
All sweets as I travel back.

Yet I feel assured, in some fashion,  
Ere the hedges are crisp with rime,  
I shall conquer this senseless passion,  
'Twill yield to toil and to time.

I will fetter these fancies roaming ;  
 Already the sun has dipped ;  
 I will trim the lamps in the gloaming,  
 I will finish my manuscript.  
 Through the night-watch, unflagging study  
 Shall banish regrets perforce ;  
 As soon as the east is ruddy  
 Our bugle shall sound ' To Horse ! '

*Scene*—ANOTHER WAYSIDE HOUSE, NEAR  
 THE NORMAN FRONTIER

HUGO and ORION in a chamber. *Evening.*

*Orion*

YOUR eyes are hollow, your step is slow,  
 And your cheek is pallid as though from toil,  
 Watching or fasting, by which I know  
 That you have been burning the midnight oil.

*Hugo*

Aye, three nights running.

*Orion*

'Twill never do  
 To travel all day, and study all night ;  
 Will you join in a gallop through mist and dew,  
 In a flight that may vie with the eagle's flight ?

*Hugo*

With all my heart. Shall we saddle ' Rollo ' ?

*Orion*

Nay, leave him undisturbed in his stall ;  
 I have steeds he would hardly care to follow.

*Hugo*

Follow, forsooth ! he can lead them all.

*Orion*

Touching his merits we will not quarrel ;  
But let me mount you for once, enough  
Of work may await your favourite sorrel,  
And the paths we must traverse to-night are  
rough.

But first let me mix you a beverage,  
To invigorate your enfeebled frame.

*[He mixes a draught and hands it to Hugo.]*

All human ills this draught can assuage.

*Hugo*

It hisses and glows like liquid flame ;  
Say, what quack nostrum is this thou 'st brewed ?  
Speak out ; I am learned in the chemist's lore.

*Orion*

There is nothing but what will do you good :  
And the drugs are simples ; 'tis hellebore,  
Nepenthe, upas, and dragon's blood,  
Absinthe, and mandrake, and mandragore.

*Hugo*

I will drink it, although, by mass and rood,  
I am just as wise as I was before.

*Scene—A ROUGH HILLY COUNTRY*

HUGO and ORION riding at speed on black horses.  
*Mountains in the distance. Night.*

*Hugo*

SEE ! the sparks that fly from our hoof-strokes make  
A fiery track that gleams in our wake ;  
Like a dream the dim landscape past us shoots,  
Our horses fly.



*Orion*

They are useful brutes,  
 Though somewhat skittish ; the foam is whit'ning  
 The crest and rein of my courser 'Lightning' ;  
 He pulls to-night, being short of work,  
 And takes his head with a sudden jerk ;  
 Still heel and steady hand on the bit,  
 For that is 'Tempest' on which you sit.

*Hugo*

'Tis the bravest steed that ever I backed ;  
 Didst mark how he crossed yon cataract ?  
 From hoof to hoof I should like to measure  
 The space he cleared.

*Orion*

He can clear at leisure  
 A greater distance. Observe the chasm  
 We are nearing. Ha ! did you feel a spasm  
 As we flew over it ?

*Hugo*

Not at all.

*Orion*

Nathless 'twas an ugly place for a fall.

*Hugo*

Let us try a race to yon mountain high,  
 That rears its dusky peak 'gainst the sky.

*Orion*

I won't disparage your horsemanship,  
 But your steed will stand neither spur nor whip,  
 And is hasty and hard to steer at times.  
 We must travel far ere the midnight chimes ;  
 We must travel back ere the east is grey.  
 Ho ! 'Lightning' ! 'Tempest' ! Away ! Away !  
[They ride on faster.]

*Scene*—A PEAK IN A MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY  
OVERHANGING A ROCKY PASS

HUGO and ORION on black horses. *Midnight.*

*Hugo*

THESE steeds are sprung from no common race,  
Their vigour seems to annihilate space ;  
What hast thou brought me here to see ?

*Orion*

No boisterous scene of unhallowed glee,  
No sabbat of witches coarse and rude,  
But a mystic and musical interlude ;  
You have longed to explore the scrolls of Fate.  
Dismount, as I do, and listen and wait.

*[They dismount.]*

*Orion (chanting)*

Spirits of earth, and air, and sea,  
Spirits unclean, and spirits untrue,  
By the symbols three, that shall nameless be,  
One of your masters calls on you.

*Spirits (chanting in the distance)*

From the bowels of earth, where gleams the gold ;  
From the air, where the powers of darkness hold  
Their court ; from the white sea-foam,  
Whence the white rose-tinted goddess sprung,  
Whom poets of every age have sung,  
Ever we come ! we come !

*Hugo*

How close to our ears the thunder peals !  
How the earth beneath us shudders and reels !

*A Voice (chanting)*

Woe to the earth ! Where men give death !  
And women give birth !

To the sons of Adam, by Cain or Seth !  
                                         Plenty and dearth !  
 To the daughters of Eve, who toil and spin,  
                                         Barren of worth !  
 Let them sigh, and sicken, and suffer sin !  
                                         Woe to the earth !

*Hugo*

What is yon phantom large and dim  
 That over the mountain seems to swim ?

*Orion*

'Tis the scarlet woman of Babylon !

*Hugo*

Whence does she come ? Where has she gone ?  
 And who is she ?

*Orion*

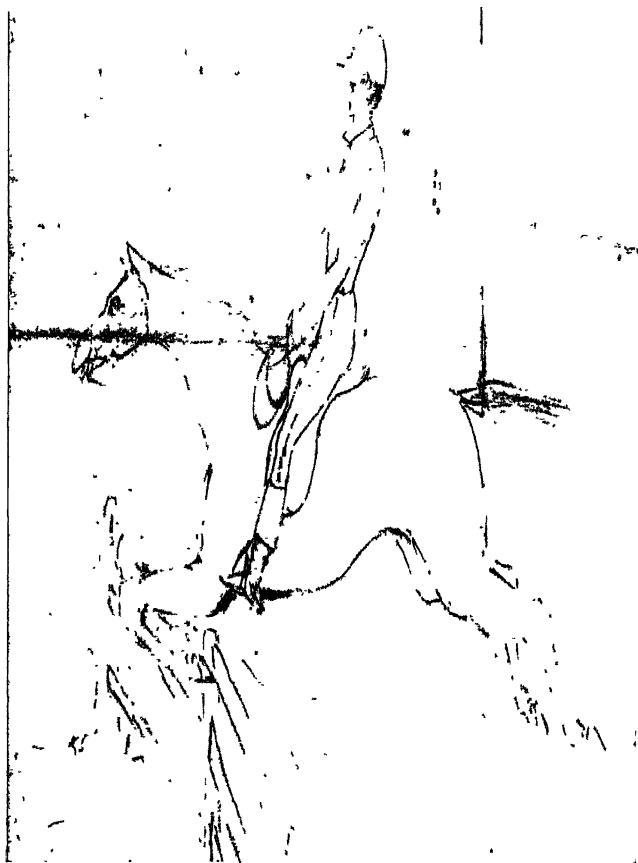
                                        You would know too much ;  
 These are subjects on which I dare not touch ;  
 And if I were to try and enlighten you  
 I should probably fail, and possibly frighten you.  
 You had better ask some learned divine,  
 Whose opinion is perhaps worth as much as mine  
 In his own conceit ; and who, besides,  
 Could tell you the brand of the beast she rides.  
 What can you see in the valley yonder ?  
 Speak out ; I can hear you, for all the thunder.

*Hugo*

I see four shadowy altars rise,  
 They seem to swell and dilate in size ;  
 Larger and clearer now they loom,  
 Now fires are lighting them through the gloom.

*A Voice (chanting)*

The first a golden-hued fire shows,  
 A blood-red flame on the second glows,



A L GORDON STEEPLE-CHASING

*Drawn by himself in a letter to Chasley Walker Reproduced by permission of Miss H Walker*

The blaze on the third is tinged like the rose,  
From the fourth a column of black smoke goes.

*Orion*

Can you see all this ?

*Hugo*

I see and hear ;  
The lights and hues are vivid and clear.

*Spirits (sing at the first altar)*

Hail, Mammon ! while man buys and barter,  
Thy kingdom in this world is sure,  
Thy prophets thou hast and thy martyrs,  
Great things in thy name they endure ;  
Thy fetters of gold crush the miser,  
The usurer bends at thy shrine,  
And the wealthier nations and the wiser  
Bow with us at this altar of thine.

*Spirits (sing at the second altar)*

Hail, Moloch ! whose banner floats blood-red  
From pole to equator unfurled,  
Whose laws redly written have stood red,  
And shall stand while standeth this world ;  
Clad in purple, with thy diadem gory,  
Thy sceptre the blood-dripping steel,  
Thy subjects with us give thee glory,  
With us at thine altar they kneel.

*Spirits (sing at the third altar)*

Hail, Sovereign ! whose fires are kindled  
By sparks from the bottomless pit,  
Has thy worship diminished or dwindled ?  
Do the yokes of thy slaves lightly sit ?  
Nay, the men of all climes and all races  
Are stirred by the flames that now stir us ;  
Then (as we do) they fall on their faces,  
Crying, ' Hear us ! O Ashtaroth, hear us ! '

*Spirits (all in chorus)*

The vulture her carrion swallows,  
 Returns to his vomit the dog,  
 In the slough of uncleanness wallows  
 The he-goat, and revels the hog.  
 Men are wise with their schools and their teachers,  
 Men are just with their creeds and their priests ;  
 Yet, in spite of their pedants and preachers,  
 They backslide in footprints of beasts !

*Hugo*

From the smoky altar there seems to come  
 A stifled murmur, a droning hum.

*Orion*

With that we have nothing at all to do,  
 Or at least not now, neither I nor you ;  
 Though some day or other, possibly,  
 We may see it closer, both you and I ;  
 Let us visit the nearest altar first,  
 Whence the yellow fires flicker and burst,  
 Like the flames from molten ore that spring ;  
 We may stand in the pale of the outer ring,  
 But forbear to trespass within the inner,  
 Lest the sins of the past should find out the sinner.

*[They approach the first altar, and stand within the  
 outer circle which surrounds it, and near the inner.]*

*Spirits (sing)*

Beneath us it flashes,  
 The glittering gold,  
 Though it turneth to ashes  
 And dross in the hold ;  
 Yet man will endeavour,  
 By fraud or by strife,  
 To grasp it and never  
 To yield it with life.

*Orion*

What can you see ?

*Hugo*

Some decrepit shapes,  
That are neither dwarfs, nor demons, nor apes ;  
In the hollow earth they appear to store  
And rake together great heaps of ore.

*Orion*

These are the gnomes, coarse sprites and rough :  
Come on, of these we have seen enough.

*[They approach second altar and stand as before.*

*Spirits (sing)*

Above us it flashes,  
The glittering steel,  
Though the red blood splashes  
Where its victims reel ;  
Yet man will endeavour  
To grapple the hilt,  
And to wield the blade ever  
Till his life be spilt.

*Orion*

What see you now ?

*Hugo*

A rocky glen,  
A horrid jumble of fighting men,  
And a face that somewhere I 've seen before.

*Orion*

Come on ; there is naught worth seeing more,  
Except the altar of Ashtaroth.

*Hugo*

To visit that altar I am loth.

*Orion*

Why so ?

*Hugo*

Nay, I cannot fathom why,  
But I feel no curiosity.

*Orion*

Come on. Stand close to the inner ring,  
And hear how sweetly these spirits sing.  
[*They approach third altar.*]

*Spirits (sing)*

Around us it flashes,  
The cestus of one  
Born of white foam, that dashes  
Beneath the white sun ;  
Let the mortal take heart, he  
Has nothing to dare :  
She is fair, Queen Astarté,  
Her subjects are fair !

*Orion*

What see you now, friend ?

*Hugo*

Wood and wold,  
And forms that look like the nymphs of old.  
There is nothing here worth looking at twice.  
I have seen enough.

*Orion*

You are far too nice ;  
Nevertheless you must look again.  
Those forms will fade.

*Hugo*

They are growing less plain  
They vanish. I see a door that seems  
To open ; a ray of sunlight gleams



From a window behind ; a vision as fair  
As the flush of dawn is standing there.

*[He gazes earnestly.]*

*Orion (sings)*

Higher and hotter the white flames glow,  
And the adamant may be thawed like snow,  
And the life for a single chance may go,

And the soul for a certainty.

O vain and shallow philosopher,  
Dost feel them quicken, dost feel them stir,  
The thoughts that have strayed again to *her*  
From whom thou hast sought to fly ?

Lo ! the furnace is heated till sevenfold ;  
Is thy brain still calm ? Is thy blood still cold  
To the curls that wander in ripples of gold

On the shoulders of ivory ?

Do the large, dark eyes, and the small, red mouth,  
Consume thine heart with a fiery drouth,  
Like the fierce sirocco that sweeps from the south,  
When the deserts are parched and dry ?

Aye, start and shiver and catch thy breath,  
The sting is certain, the venom is death,  
And the scales are flashing the fruit beneath,  
And the fang striketh suddenly.

At the core the ashes are bitter and dead,  
But the rind is fair and the rind is red,  
It has ever been plucked since the serpent said,  
Thou shalt *not surely* die.

*[Hugo tries to enter the inner ring,  
Orion holds him back ; they struggle.]*

*Hugo*

Unhand me, slave ! or quail to the rod !  
Agatha ! Speak ! in the name of God !

*[The vision disappears, the altars vanish.  
Hugo falls insensible.]*

*Scene*—THE WAYSIDE HOUSE

HUGO *waking in his chamber. ORION unseen at first.*  
*Morning.*

*Hugo*

VANISH, fair and fatal vision !  
 Fleeting shade of fevered sleep,  
 Chiding one whose indecision  
 Waking substance failed to keep ;  
 Picture into life half starting,  
 As in life once seen before,  
 Parting somewhat sadly, parting  
 Slowly at the chamber door ;

Were my waking senses duller ?  
 Have I seen with mental eye  
 Light, and shade, and warmth and colour,  
 Plainer than reality ?  
 Sunlight that on tangled tresses  
 Every ripple gilds and tips ;  
 Balm and bloom, and breath of kisses,  
 Warm on dewy, scarlet lips.

Dark eyes veiling half their splendour  
 'Neath their lashes' darker fringe,  
 Dusky, dreamy, deep and tender,  
 Passing smile and passing tinge ;  
 Dimpling fast and flushing faster,  
 Ivory chin and coral cheek,  
 Pearly strings, by alabaster  
 Neck and arms made faint and weak ;

Drooping, downcast lids enduring  
 Gaze of man unwillingly ;  
 Sudden sidelong gleams alluring,  
 Partly arch and partly shy.

Do I bless or curse that beauty ?  
Am I longing, am I loth ?  
Is it passion, is it duty  
That I strive with, one or both ?

Round about one fiery centre  
Wayward thought like moths revolve.

[*He sees Orion.*]

Ha ! Orion, thou didst enter  
Unperceived. I pray thee solve  
These two questions : Firstly, tell me  
Must I strive for wrong or right ?  
Secondly, what things befell me,  
Facts, or phantasies, last night ?

*Orion*

First, your strife is all a sham, you  
Know as well as I which wins ;  
Second, waking sins will damn you,  
Never mind your sleeping sins ;  
Both your questions thus I answer,  
Listen, ere you seek or shun :  
I at least am no romancer,  
What you long for may be won.  
Turn again and travel Rhineward,  
Tread once more the flowery path.

*Hugo*

Aye, the flowery path that, sinward  
Pointing, ends in sin and wrath.

*Orion*

Songs by love-birds lightly carolled  
Even the just man may allure.

*Hugo*

To his shame ; in this wise Harold  
Sinned, his punishment was sure.

*Orion*

Nay, the Dane was worse than you are,  
 Base and pitiless to boot ;  
 Doubtless all are bad, yet few are  
 Cruel, false and dissolute.

*Hugo*

Some sins foreign to our nature  
 Seem ; we take no credit when  
 We escape them.

*Orion*

Yet the creature,  
 Sin-created, lives to sin.

*Hugo*

Be it so ; come good, come evil,  
 Ride we to the Rhine again !

*Orion (aside)*

'Gainst the logic of the devil  
 Human logic strives in vain.

*Scene—A CAMP NEAR THE BLACK FOREST*

RUDOLPH, OSRIC, DAGOBERT, and followers. ORION  
*disguised as one of the Free-lancers. Mid-day.*

*Osric*

Now, by axe of Odin, and hammer of Thor,  
 And by all the gods of the Vikings' war,  
 I swear we have quitted our homes in vain :  
 We have nothing to look to, glory nor gain.  
 Will our galley return to Norway's shore  
 With heavier gold or with costlier store ?  
 Will our exploits furnish the scald with a song?  
 We have travelled too far, we have tarried too long  
 Say, captains all, is there ever a village  
 For miles around that is worth the pillage ?

Will it pay the costs of my men or yours  
To harry the homesteads of German boors ?  
Have we cause for pride in our feats of arms  
When we plunder the peasants or sack the  
farms ?

I tell thee, Rudolph of Rothenstein,  
That were thy soldiers willing as mine,  
And I sole leader of this array,  
I would give Prince Otto battle this day.  
Dost thou call thy followers men of war ?  
Oh, Dagobert ! thou whose ancestor  
On the neck of the Cæsar's offspring trod,  
Who was justly surnamed 'The Scourge of God.'  
Yet in flight lies safety. Skirmish and run  
To forest and fastness ; Teuton and Hun,  
From the banks of the Rhine to the Danube's  
shore,

And back to the banks of the Rhine once more :  
Retreat from the face of an armed foe,  
Robbing garden and henroost where'er you go.  
Let the short alliance betwixt us cease,  
I and my Norsemen will go in peace !  
I wot it never will suit with us,  
Such existence, tame and inglorious ;  
I could live no worse, living single-handed,  
And better with half my men disbanded.

### *Rudolph*

Jarl Osric, what wouldst thou have me do ?  
'Gainst Otto's army our men count few ;  
With one chance of victory, fight, say I !  
But not when defeat is a certainty.  
If Rudiger joins us with his free-lances,  
Our chance will be equal to many chances ;  
For Rudiger is both prompt and wary,  
And his men are gallant though mercenary ;  
But the knave refuses to send a lance  
Till half the money is paid in advance.

*Dagobert*

May his avarice wither him like a curse !  
 I guess he has heard of our late reverse ;  
 But, Rudolph, whether he goes or stays,  
 There is reason in what Jarl Osric says ;  
 Of provisions we need a fresh supply,  
 And our butts and flasks are shallow dry.  
 My men are beginning to grumble sadly,  
 'Tis no wonder, since they must fare so badly.

*Rudolph*

We have plenty of foragers out, and still  
 We have plenty of hungry mouths to fill ;  
 And, moreover, by some means, foul or fair,  
 We must raise money ; 'tis little I care,  
 So long as we raise it, whence it comes.

*Osric*

Shall we sit till nightfall biting our thumbs ?  
 The shortest plan is ever the best ;  
 Has any one here got aught to suggest ?

*Orion*

The corn-fields are golden that skirt the Rhine,  
 Fat are the oxen, strong is the wine,  
 In those pleasant pastures, those cellars deep,  
 That o'erflow with the tears that those vineyards  
     weep ;  
 Is it silver you stand in need of, or gold ?  
 Ingot or coin ? There is wealth untold  
 In the ancient convent of Englemehr ;  
 That is not so very far from here.  
 The Abbot, esteemed a holy man,  
 Will hold what he has and grasp what he can :  
 The cream of the soil he loves to skim,  
 Why not levy a contribution on him ?

*Dagobert*

The stranger speaks well ; not far away  
That convent lies ; and one summer's day  
Will suffice for a horseman to reach the gate ;  
The garrison soon would capitulate,  
Since the armed retainers are next to none,  
And the walls, I wot, may be quickly won.

*Rudolph*

I kept those walls for two months and more  
When they feared the riders of Melchior ;  
That was little over three years ago.  
Their Abbot is thrifty, as well I know,  
He haggled sorely about the price  
Of our service.

*Dagobert*

Rudolph, he paid thee twice.

*Rudolph*

Well, what of that ? Since then I 've tried  
To borrow from him ; now I know he lied  
When he told me he could not spare the sum  
I asked. If we to his gates should come,  
He could spare it though it were doubled ; and  
still,  
This war with the church, I like it ill.

*Osric*

The creed of our fathers is well-nigh dead,  
And the creed of the Christian reigns in its  
stead ;  
But the creed of the Christian, too, may die,  
For your creeds or your churches what care I !  
If there be plunder at Englemehr,  
Let us strike our tents and thitherward steer

*Scene*—A FARM HOUSE ON THE RHINE

*(About a mile from the Convent)*

HUGO *in chamber alone.* Enter ERIC

*Eric*

WHAT, Hugo, still at the Rhine ! I thought  
You were home. You have travelled by stages short.

*Hugo (with hesitation)*

Our homeward march was labour in vain,  
We had to retrace our steps again ;  
It was here or hereabouts that I lost  
Some papers of value ; at any cost  
I must find them ; and which way lies your course ?

*Eric*

I go to recruit Prince Otto's force.  
I cannot study as you do ; I  
Am wearied with inactivity,  
So I carry a blade engrimed with rust  
(That a hand sloth-slackened has, I trust,  
Not quite forgotten the way to wield),  
To strike once more on the tented field.

*Hugo*

Fighting is all a mistake, friend Eric,  
And has been so since the age Homeric,  
When Greece was shaken and Troy undone,  
Ten thousand lives for a worthless one.  
Yet I blame you not ; you might well do worse ;  
Better fight and perish than live to curse  
The day you were born ; and such has been  
The lot of many, and shall, I ween,  
Be the lot of more. If Thurston chooses  
He may go with you ; the blockhead abuses  
Me and the life I lead.



*Enter Orion.*

*Orion*

Great news !

The Englemehr monks will shake in their shoes ;  
In the soles of their callous feet will shake  
The barefooted friars. The nuns will quake

*Hugo*

Wherefore ?

*Orion*

The outlaw of Rothenstein  
Has come with his soldiers to the Rhine,  
Backed by those hardy adventurers  
From the northern forests of pines and firs,  
And Dagobert's horse. They march as straight  
As the eagle swoops, to the convent gate.

*Hugo*

We must do something to save the place.

*Orion*

They are sure to take it in any case,  
Unless the sum that they ask is paid.

*Eric*

Some effort on our part must be made.

*Hugo*

'Tis not so much for the monks I care.

*Eric*

Nor I ; but the Abbess and nuns are there.

*Orion*

'Tis not our business ; what can we do ?  
They are too many, and we are too few ;  
And yet, I suppose, you will save if you can,  
That lady, your ward or your kinswoman.

*Hugo*

She is no kinswoman of mine ;  
How far is Otto's camp from the Rhine ?

*Orion*

Too far for help in such time of need  
To be brought, though you used your utmost speed.

*Eric*

Nay, that I doubt.

*Hugo*

And how many men

Have they ?

*Orion*

To your one they could muster ten.

*Eric*

I know Count Rudolph, and terms may be made  
With him, I fancy ; for though his trade  
Is a rough one now, gainsay it who can,  
He was once a knight and a gentleman.  
And Dagobert, the chief of the Huns,  
Bad as he is, will spare the nuns ;  
Though neither he nor the Count could check  
Those lawless men, should they storm and sack  
The convent. Jarl Osric, too, I know ;  
He is rather a formidable foe,  
And will likely enough be troublesome ;  
But the others, I trust, to terms will come.

*Hugo*

Eric, how many men have you ?  
I can count a score.

*Eric*

I have only two.

*Hugo*

At every hazard we must try to save  
The nuns.

*Eric*

Count Rudolph shall think we have  
A force that almost equals his own,  
If I can confer with him alone.

*Orion*

He is close at hand ; by this time he waits  
The Abbot's reply at the convent gates.

*Hugo*

We had better send him a herald.

*Eric*

I will go myself.

Nay,  
[*Eric goes out.*]

*Hugo*

Orion, stay !

So this is the reed on which I've leaned,  
These are the hopes thou hast fostered, these  
The flames thou hast fanned. Oh, lying fiend !  
Is it thus thou dost keep thy promises ?

*Orion*

Strong language, Hugo, and most unjust ;  
You will cry out before you are hurt—  
You will live to recall your words, I trust.  
Fear nothing from Osric or Dagobert,  
These are your friends, if you only knew it,  
And would take the advice of a friend sincere :  
Neglect his counsels and you must rue it,  
For I know by a sign the crisis is near.  
Accept the terms of these outlaws all,  
And be thankful that things have fallen out  
Exactly as you would have had them fall—  
You may save the one that you care about :  
Otherwise, how did you hope to gain  
Access to her—on what pretence ?  
What were the schemes that worried your brain  
To tempt her there or to lure her thence ?

You must have bungled, and raised a scandal  
 About your ears, that might well have shamed  
 The rudest Hun, the veriest Vandal,  
 Long or ever the bird was tamed.

*Hugo*

The convent is scarce surrounded yet,  
 We might reach and hold it against their force  
 Till another sun has risen and set ;  
 And should I despatch my fleetest horse  
 To Otto——

*Orion*

For Abbot, or Monk, or Friar,  
 Between ourselves, 'tis little you care  
 If their halls are harried by steel and fire ;  
 Their avarice left your heritage bare.  
 Forsake them ! Mitres, and cowls, and hoods,  
 Will cover vices while earth endures ;  
 Through the green and gold of the summer woods  
 Ride out with that pretty bird of yours.  
 If again you fail to improve your chance,  
 Why, then, my friend, I can only say  
 You are duller far than the dullest lance  
 That rides in Dagobert's troop this day.  
 ' *Fœmina semper*,' frown not thus,  
 The girl was always giddy and wild,  
 Vain, and foolish, and frivolous,  
 Since she fled from her father's halls, a child.  
 I sought to initiate you once  
 In the mystic lore of the old Chaldæan ;  
 But I found you far too stubborn a dunce,  
 And your tastes are coarser and more plebeian.  
 Yet mark my words, for I read the stars,  
 And trace the future in yonder sky :  
 To the right are wars and rumours of wars,  
 To the left are peace and prosperity.  
 Fear nought. The world shall never detect  
 The cloven hoof, so carefully hid

By the scholar so staid and circumspect,  
So wise for once to do as he's bid.  
Remember what pangs come year by year  
For opportunity that has fled ;  
And Thora in ignorance.

*Hugo*

Name not her !  
I am sorely tempted to strike thee dead !

*Orion*

Nay, I hardly think you will take my life,  
The angel Michael was once my foe ;  
He had a little the best of our strife,  
Yet he never could deal so stark a blow.

*Scene*—A CHAMBER IN THE NUNS' APART-  
MENTS OF THE CONVENT

AGATHA and URSULA.

*Agatha*

My sire in my childhood pledged my hand  
To Hugo—I know not why—  
They were comrades then, 'neath the Duke's com-  
mand,  
In the wars of Lombardy.  
I thought, ere my summers had turned sixteen,  
That mine was a grievous case ;  
Save once, for an hour, I had never seen  
My intended bridegroom's face ;  
And maidens vows of their own will plight.  
Unknown to my kinsfolk all  
My love was vowed to a Danish knight,  
A guest in my father's hall.  
His foot fell lightest in merry dance,  
His shaft never missed the deer ;  
He could fly a hawk, he could wield a lance  
Our wildest colt he could steer.

His deep voice ringing through hall or glen  
Had never its match in song ;  
And little was known of his past life then,  
Or of Dorothea's wrong.  
I loved him—Lady Abbess, I know  
That my love was foolish now ;  
I was but a child five years ago,  
And thoughtless as bird on bough.  
One evening Hugo the Norman came,  
And, to shorten a weary tale,  
I fled that night (let me bear the blame),  
With Harold by down and dale.  
He had mounted me on a dappled steed,  
And another of coal-black hue  
He rode himself ; and away at speed  
We fled, through mist and dew.

Of miles we had ridden some half a score,  
We had halted beside a spring,  
When the breeze to our ears through the still night  
bore  
A distant trample and ring ;  
We listened one breathing space, and caught  
The clatter of mounted men.  
With vigour renewed by their respite short  
Our horses dashed through the glen.  
Another league, and we listened in vain ;  
The breeze to our ears came mute ;  
But we heard them again on the spacious plain,  
Faint tidings of hot pursuit.  
In the misty light of a moon half hid  
By the dark or fleecy rack,  
Our shadows over the moorland slid ;  
Still listening and looking back.  
So we fled (with a cheering word to say  
At times as we hurried on),  
From sounds that at intervals died away,  
And at intervals came anon.

Another league, and my lips grew dumb,  
And I felt my spirit quailing,  
For closer those sounds began to come,  
And the speed of my horse was failing.  
'The grey is weary and lame to boot,'  
Quoth Harold; 'the black is strong,  
And their steeds are blown with their fierce  
pursuit,  
What wonder! our start was long.  
Now, lady, behind me mount the black,  
The double load he can bear;  
We are safe when we reach the forest track,  
Fresh horses and friends wait there.'  
Then I sat behind him and held his waist,  
And faster we seemed to go  
By moss and moor; but for all our haste  
Came the tramp of the nearing foe.  
A dyke through the mist before us hovered,  
And, quickened by voice and heel,  
The black overleaped it, staggered, recovered;  
Still nearer that muffled peal.  
And louder on sward the hoof-strokes grew,  
And duller, though not less nigh,  
On deader sand; and a dark speck drew  
On my vision suddenly.  
And a single horseman in fleet career,  
Like a shadow appeared to glide  
To within six lances' lengths of our rear,  
And there for a space to bide.  
Quoth Harold, 'Speak, has the moon re-  
vealed  
His face?' I replied, 'Not so;  
Yet 'tis none of my kinsfolk,' then he wheeled  
In the saddle and scanned the foe,  
And muttered, still gazing in our wake,  
'Tis he; now I will not fight  
The brother again, for the sister's sake,  
While I can escape by flight.'

‘ Who, Harold ? ’ I asked ; but he never spoke.

By the cry of the bittern harsh,  
And the bullfrog’s dull discordant croak,  
I guessed that we neared the marsh ;  
And the moonbeam flashed on watery sedge  
As it broke from a strip of cloud,  
Ragged and jagged about the edge,  
And shaped like a dead man’s shroud.  
And flagged and faltered our gallant steed  
’ Neath the weight of his double burden,  
As we splashed through water, and crashed through  
reed ;

Then the soil began to harden,  
And again we gained, or we seemed to gain,  
With our foe in the deep morass ;  
But those fleet hoofs thundered, and gained again,  
When they trampled the firmer grass.  
And I cried, and Harold again looked back,  
And bade me fasten mine eyes on  
The forest, that loomed like a patch of black  
Standing out from the faint horizon.

‘ Courage, sweetheart ! we are saved,’ he said ;

‘ With the moorland our danger ends,  
And close to the borders of yonder glade  
They tarry, our trusty friends.’  
Where the mossy uplands rise and dip  
On the edge of the leafy dell,  
With a lurch, like the lurch of a sinking ship,  
The black horse toppled and fell.  
Unharméd we lit on the velvet sward,  
And even as I lit I lay,  
But Harold uprose, unsheathed his sword,  
And tossed his scabbard away,  
And spake through his teeth, ‘ Good brother-in-law,  
Forbearance, at last, is spent ;  
The strife that thy soul hath lusted for,  
Thou shalt have to thy soul’s content ! ’



While he spoke, our pursuer past us swept,  
Ere he reined his warhorse proud,  
To his haunches flung, then to the earth he leapt,  
And my lover's voice rang loud :  
'Thrice welcome ! Hugo of Normandy,  
Thou hast come at our time of need ;  
This lady will thank thee, and so will I,  
For the loan of thy sorrel steed !'

And never a word Lord Hugo said,  
They closed 'twixt the wood and the wold,  
And the white steel flickered over my head  
In the moonlight calm and cold ;  
'Mid the feathery grasses crouching low,  
With face bowed down to the dust,  
I heard the clash of each warded blow,  
The click of each parried thrust,  
And the shuffling feet that bruised the lawn,  
As they traversed here and there,  
And the breath through the clenched teeth heavily  
drawn,

When breath there was none to spare ;  
Sharp ringing sword-play, dull trampling heel,  
Short pause, spent force to regain,  
Quick muffled footfall, harsh grating steel,  
Sharp ringing rally again ;  
They seemed long hours those moments fleet,  
As I counted them one by one,  
Till a dead weight toppled across my feet,  
And I knew that the strife was done.

When I looked up, after a little space,  
As though from a fearful dream,  
The moon was flinging on Harold's face  
A white and a weird-like gleam ;  
And I felt mine ankles moist and warm  
With the blood, that trickled slow  
From a spot on the doublet beneath his arm,  
From a ghastly gash on his brow ;

I heard the tread of the sorrel's hoof  
As he bore his lord away ;  
They passed me slowly, keeping aloof,  
Like spectres misty and grey.  
I thought Lord Hugo had left me there  
To die, but it was not so ;  
Yet then for death I had little care,  
My soul seemed numbed by the blow ;  
A faintness followed, a sickly swoon,  
A long and a dreamless sleep,  
And I woke to the light of a sultry noon  
In my father's castled keep.  
  
And thus, Lady Abbess, it came to pass  
That my father vowed his vow ;  
Must his daughter espouse the church ? Alas !  
Is she better or wiser now ?  
For some are feeble and others strong,  
And feeble am I and frail.  
Mother ! 'tis not that I love the wrong,  
'Tis not that I loathe the veil,  
But with heart still ready to go astray,  
If assailed by a fresh temptation,  
I could sin again as I sinned that day  
For a girl's infatuation.  
See ! Harold, the Dane, thou say'st is dead,  
Yet I weep *not bitterly* ;  
As I fled with the Dane, so I might have fled  
With Hugo of Normandy.

### *Ursula*

My child, I advise no hasty vows,  
Yet I pray that in life's brief span  
Thou may'st learn that our church is a fairer spouse  
Than fickle and erring man ;  
Though fenced for a time by the church's pale,  
When that time expires thou 'rt free,  
And we cannot force thee to take the veil,  
Nay, we scarce can counsel thee.

*Enter the Abbot hastily.*

*Basil (the Abbot)*

I am sorely stricken with shame and grief,  
It has come by the self-same sign,  
A summons brief from the outlawed chief,  
Count Rudolph of Rothenstein.  
Lady Abbess, ere worse things come to pass,  
I would speak with thee alone ;  
Alack and alas ! for by the rood and mass  
I fear we are all undone.

*Scene—A FARM HOUSE NEAR THE CONVENT*

*A Chamber furnished with writing materials. HUGO, ERIC, and THURSTON on one side, on the other OSRIC, RUDOLPH, and DAGOBERT.*

*Osric*

WE have granted too much, ye ask for more ;  
I am not skilled in your clerkly lore,  
I scorn your logic ; I had rather die  
Than live like Hugo of Normandy ;  
I am a Norseman, frank and plain ;  
Ye must read the parchment over again.

*Eric*

Jarl Osric, twice we have read this scroll.

*Osric*

Thou hast read a part.

*Eric*

I have read the whole.

*Osric*

Aye, since I attached my signature !

*Eric*

Before and since !

*Rudolph*

Nay, of this be sure,  
Thou hast signed ; in fairness now let it rest.

*Osric*

I had rather have signed upon Hugo's crest ;  
He has argued the question mouth to mouth  
With the wordy lore of the subtle south ;  
Let him or any one of his band  
Come and argue the question hand to hand.  
With the aid of my battleaxe I will show  
That a score of words are not worth one blow.

*Thurston*

To the devil with thee and thy battleaxe ;  
I would send the pair of ye back in your tracks,  
With an answer that even to thy boorish brain  
Would scarce need repetition again.

*Osric*

Thou Saxon slave to a milksop knight,  
I will give thy body to raven and kite.

*Thurston*

Thou liest ; I am a freeborn man,  
And thy huge carcass—in cubit and span  
Like the giant's of Gath—'neath Saxon steel,  
Shall furnish the kites with a fatter meal.

*Osric*

Now, by Odin !

*Rudolph*

Jarl Osric, curb thy wrath ;  
Our names are signed, our words have gone forth.

*Hugo*

I blame thee, Thurston.

*Thurston*

And I, too, blame  
Myself, since I follow a knight so tame !  
[*Thurston goes out.*]

*Osric*

The Saxon hound, he said I lied !

*Rudolph*

I pray thee, good Viking, be pacified.

*Osric*

Why do we grant the terms they ask ?  
To crush them all were an easy task.

*Dagobert*

That know'st thou not ; if it come to war,  
They are stronger, perhaps, than we bargain for.

*Eric*

Jarl Osric, thou may'st recall thy words—  
Should we meet again.

*Osric*

Should we meet with swords,  
Thou, too, may'st recall them to thy sorrow.

*Hugo*

Eric ! we dally. Sir Count, good-morrow.

*Scene*—THE GUEST CHAMBER OF THE  
CONVENT

HUGO, ERIC, and ORION.

*Eric*

HUGO, their siege we might have tried ;  
This place would be easier fortified  
Than I thought at first : it is now too late,  
They have cut off our access to the gate.

*Hugo*

I have weighed the chances and counted the cost,  
And I know by the stars that all is lost  
If we take up this quarrel.

*Eric*

So let it be !

I yield to one who is wiser than me. (*Aside.*)  
Nevertheless, I have seen the day  
When the stars would scarcely have bade us stay.

*Enter the Abbot, Cyril, and other Monks.*

*Hugo*

Lord Abbot, we greet thee. Good fathers all,  
We bring you greeting.

*Orion (aside)*

And comfort small.

*Abbot*

God's benediction on you, my sons.

*Hugo*

May He save you, too, from Norsemen and Huns !  
Since the gates are beleaguered and walls begirt  
By the forces of Osric and Dagobert ;  
'Tis a heavy price that the knaves demand.

*Abbot*

Were we to mortgage the church's land  
We never could raise what they would extort.

*Orion (aside)*

The price is too long and the notice too short.

*Eric*

And you know the stern alternative.

*Abbot*

If we die we die, if we live we live :  
God's will be done ; and our trust is sure  
In Him, though His chastenings we endure.  
Two messengers rode from here last night,  
To Otto they carry news of our plight ;  
On my swiftest horses I saw them go.

*Orion (aside)*

Then his swiftest horses are wondrous slow.

*Eric*

One of these is captive and badly hurt ;  
By the reckless riders of Dagobert  
He was overtaken and well-nigh slain,  
Not a league from here on the open plain.

*Abbot*

But the other escaped.

*Eric*

It may be so ;  
We had no word of him, but we know  
That unless you can keep these walls for a day  
At least, the Prince is too far away  
To afford relief.

*Abbot*

Then a hopeless case  
Is ours, and with death we are face to face.

*Eric*

You have armed retainers.

*Cyril (a Monk)*

Aye, some half score ;  
And some few of the brethren, less or more,  
Have in youth the brunt of the battle bided,  
Yet our armoury is but ill provided.

*Hugo*

We have terms of truce from the robbers in chief,  
Though the terms are partial, the truce but brief ;  
To Abbess, to nuns, and novices all,  
And to every woman within your wall,  
We can offer escort, and they shall ride  
From hence in safety whate'er betide.

*Abbot*

What escort, Hugo, canst thou afford ?

*Hugo*

Some score of riders who call me lord  
Bide at the farm not a mile from here,  
Till we rejoin them they will not stir ;  
My page and armourer wait below,  
And all our movements are watched by the foe.  
Strict stipulation was made, of course,  
That except ourselves, neither man nor horse  
Should enter your gates—they were keen to shun  
The chance of increasing your garrison.

*Eric*

I hold safe conduct here in my hand,  
Signed by the chiefs of that lawless band ;  
See Rudolph's name, no disgrace to a clerk,  
And Dagobert's scrawl, and Osríc's mark ;  
Jarl signed sorely against his will,  
With a scratch like the print of a raven's bill ;  
But the foe have mustered in sight of the gate.  
For another hour they will scarcely wait ;  
Bid Abbess and dame prepare with haste.

*Hugo*

Lord Abbot, I tell thee candidly  
There is no great love between thou and I,  
As well thou know'st ; but, nevertheless,  
I would we were more, or thy foes were less.



*Abbot*

I will summon the Lady Abbess straight.  
[*The Abbot and Monks go out.*]

*Eric*

'Tis hard to leave these men to their fate,  
Norseman and Hun will never relent ;  
Their day of grace upon earth is spent.  
[*Hugo goes out, followed by Orion.*]

*Scene*—THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE  
GUEST CHAMBER

*HUGO* *pacing up and down.* *ORION* *leaning  
against the wall.*

*Hugo*

My day of grace with theirs is past.  
I might have saved them ; 'tis too late—  
Too late for both. The die is cast,  
And I resign me to my fate.  
God's vengeance I await.

*Orion*

The boundary 'twixt right and wrong  
Is not so easy to discern ;  
And man is weak and fate is strong,  
And destiny man's hopes will spurn,  
Man's schemes will overturn.

*Hugo*

Thou liest, thou fiend ! Not unawares  
The sinner swallows Satan's bait,  
Nor pits concealed nor hidden snares  
Seeks blindly ; wherefore dost thou prate  
Of destiny and fate ?

*Orion*

Who first named fate ? But never mind,  
Let that pass by—to Adam's fall  
And Adam's curse look back, and find  
Iniquity the lot of all,  
And sin original.

*Hugo*

But I have sinned, repented, sinned,  
Till seven times that sin may be  
By seventy multiplied ; the wind  
Is constant when compared with me,  
And stable is the sea !

My hopes are sacrificed, for what ?  
For days of folly, less or more,  
For years to see those dead hopes rot,  
Like dead weeds scattered on the shore,  
Beyond the surfs that roar !

*Orion*

The wiles of Eve are swift to smite ;  
Aye, swift to smite and not to spare—  
Red lips and round limbs sweet and white,  
Dark eyes and sunny, silken hair,  
Thy betters may ensnare.

*Hugo*

Not so ; the strife 'twixt hell and heaven  
I felt last night, and well I knew  
The crisis ; but my aid was given  
To hell. Thou 'st known the crisis too,  
For once thou 'st spoken true.

Having foretold it, there remains  
For grace no time, for hope no room ;  
Even now I seem to feel the pains  
Of hell, that wait beyond the gloom  
Of my dishonoured tomb.

Thou who hast lived and died to save  
Us sinners, Christ of Galilee !  
Thy great love pardoned and forgave  
The dying thief upon the tree,  
Thou canst not pardon me !

Dear Lord ! hear Thou my latest prayer,  
For prayer must die since hope is dead ;  
Thy Father's vengeance let me bear,  
Nor let my guilt be visited  
Upon a guiltless head !

Ah ! God is just ! Full sure I am  
He never did predestinate  
Our souls to hell. Ourselves we damn—  
[*To Orion, with sudden passion.*]  
Serpent ! I know thee now, too late ;  
Curse thee ! Work out thy hate !

*Orion*

I hate thee not ; thy grievous plight  
Would move my pity, but I bear  
A curse to which thy curse seems light ;  
Thy wrong is better than my right,  
My day is darker than thy night ;  
Beside the whitest hope I share  
How white is thy despair !

*Scene*—THE CHAPEL OF THE CONVENT

URSULA, AGATHA, *Nuns and Novices.*

*(Hymn of the Nuns)*

Jehovah ! we bless Thee,  
All works of Thine hand  
Extol Thee, confess Thee ;  
By sea and by land,

By mountain and river,  
By forest and glen,  
They praise Thee for ever !  
And ever ! Amen !

The heathen are raging  
Against Thee, O Lord !  
The ungodly are waging  
Rash war against God !  
Arise, and deliver  
Us, sheep of Thy pen,  
Who praise Thee for ever !  
And ever ! Amen !

Thou Shepherd of Zion !  
Thy firstlings did'st tear  
From jaws of the lion,  
From teeth of the bear ;  
Thy strength to deliver  
Is strong now as then.  
We praise Thee for ever !  
And ever ! Amen !

Thine arm hath delivered  
Thy servants of old,  
Hath scattered and shivered  
The spears of the bold,  
Hath emptied the quiver  
Of bloodthirsty men  
We praise Thee for ever !  
And ever ! Amen !

Nathless shall Thy right hand  
Those counsels fulfil  
Most wise in Thy sight, and  
We bow to Thy will ;  
Thy children quail never  
For dungeon or den,  
They praise Thee for ever !  
And ever ! Amen !

Though fierce tribulation  
Endure for a space,  
Yet God ! our salvation !  
We gain by Thy grace,  
At end of life's fever,  
Bliss passing man's ken ;  
There to praise Thee for ever !  
And ever ! Amen !

*Scene*—THE GUEST ROOM OF THE CONVENT

HUGO, ERIC, and ORION. *Enter* URSULA,  
AGATHA, and Nuns.

*Ursula*

HUGO, we reject thine offers,  
Not that we can buy  
Safety from the church's coffers,  
Neither can we fly.  
Far too great the price they seek is,  
Let their lawless throng  
Come, we wait their coming ; weak is  
Man, but God is strong.

*Eric*

Think again on our proposals ;  
It will be too late  
When the robbers hold carousals  
On this side the gate.

*Ursula*

For myself I speak and others  
Weak and frail as I ;  
We will not desert our brothers  
In adversity.

*Hugo (to the Nuns)*

Does the Abbess thus advance her  
Will before ye all ?

*A Nun*

We will stay.

*Hugo*

Is this thine answer,

Agatha ? The wall

Is a poor protection truly,

And the gates are weak,

And the Norsemen most unruly.

Come, then.

*A Nun (to Agatha)*

Sister, speak !

*Orion (aside to Hugo)*

Press her ! She her fears dissembling,

Stands irresolute ;

She will yield—her limbs are trembling,

Though her lips are mute.

[*A trumpet is heard without.*]

*Eric*

Hark ! their savage war-horn blowing

Chafes at our delay.

*Hugo*

Agatha, we must be going.

Come, girl !

*Agatha (clinging to Ursula)*

Must I stay ?

*Ursula*

Nay, my child, thou shalt not make me

Judge ; I cannot give

Orders to a novice.

*Agatha*

Take me,

Hugo ! Let me live !

*Eric (to Nuns)*

Foolish women ! will ye tarry,  
Spite of all we say ?

*Hugo*

Must we use our strength and carry  
You by force away ?

*Ursula*

Bad enough thou art, Sir Norman,  
Yet thou wilt not do  
This thing. Shame !—on men make war,  
man,  
Not on women few.

*Eric*

Heed her not—her life she barter,  
Of her free accord,  
For her faith ; and, doubtless, martyrs  
Have their own reward.

*Ursula*

In the church's cause thy father  
Never grudged his blade—  
Hugo, did he rue it ?

*Orion*

Rather !

He was poorly paid.

*Hugo*

Abbess, this is not my doing,  
I have said my say ;  
How can I avert the ruin,  
Even for a day,  
Since they count two hundred fairly,  
While we count a score ;  
And thine own retainers barely  
Count a dozen more ?

*Agatha (kneeling to Ursula)*

Ah ! forgive me, Lady Abbess,  
 Bless me ere I go ;  
 She who under sod and slab is  
 Lying, cold and low,  
 Scarce would turn away in anger  
 From a child so frail ;  
 Not dear life, but deadly danger,  
 Makes her daughter quail.

*Hugo*

Eric, will those faces tearful  
 To God's judgment seat  
 Haunt us ?

*Eric*

Death is not so fearful.

*Hugo*

No, but life is sweet—  
 Sweet, for once, to me, though sinful.

*Orion (to Hugo)*

Earth is scant of bliss ;  
 Wisest he who takes his skinful  
 When the chance is his.

*(To Ursula)*

Lady Abbess ! stay and welcome  
 Osric's savage crew ;  
 Yet when pains of death and hell come,  
 Thou thy choice may'st rue.

*Ursula (to Orion)*

What dost thou 'neath roof-trees sacred ?  
 Man or fiend, depart !

*Orion*

Dame, thy tongue is sharp and acrid,  
 Yet I bear the smart.



*Ursula (advancing and raising up a crucifix)*

I conjure thee by this symbol

Leave us ! *[Orion goes out hastily.]*

*Hugo*

Ha ! the knave,

He has made an exit nimble ;

Abbess ! thou art brave.

Yet once gone, we 're past recalling ;

Let no blame be mine.

See, thy sisters' tears are falling

Fast, and so are thine.

*Ursula*

Fare you well ! The teardrop splashes

Vainly on the ice.

Ye will sorrow o'er our ashes

And your cowardice.

*Eric*

Sorry am I, yet my sorrow

Cannot alter fate ;

Should Prince Otto come to-morrow,

He will come too late.

*Hugo*

Nay, old comrade, she hath spoken

Words we must not hear ;

Shall we pause for sign or token—

Taunted twice with fear ?

Yonder, hilt to hilt adjusted,

Stand the swords in which we trusted

Years ago. Their blades have rusted,

So, perchance, have we.

Ursula ! thy words may shame us,

Yet we once were counted famous,

*Morituri, salutamus,*

*Aut victuri, te !*

*[They go out.]*

*Scene*—THE OUTSKIRTS OF RUDOLPH'S  
CAMP

RUDOLPH, OSRIC, and DAGOBERT. HUGO.

*Rudolph*

LORD HUGO ! thy speech is madness ;  
Thou hast taxed our patience too far ;  
We offered thee peace—with gladness,  
We gladly accept thy war.

*Dagobert*

And the clemency we extended  
To thee and thine we recall ;  
And the treaty 'twixt us is ended—  
We are ready to storm the wall.

*Osric*

Now tear yon parchment to tatters,  
Thou shalt make no further use  
Of our safeguard ; the wind that scatters  
The scroll shall scatter the truce.

*Hugo*

Jarl Osric, to save the spilling  
Of blood, and the waste of life,  
I am willing, if thou art willing,  
With thee to decide this strife ;  
Let thy comrades draw their force back :  
I defy thee to single fight,  
I will meet thee on foot or horseback,  
And God shall defend the right.

*Rudolph*

No single combat shall settle  
This strife ; thou art overbold—  
Thou hast put us all on our mettle,  
Now the game in our hands we hold.

*Dagobert*

Our lances round thee have hovered,  
Have seen where thy fellows bide ;  
Thy weakness we have discovered,  
Thy nakedness we have spied.

*Osric*

And hearken, knight, to my story—  
When sacked are the convent shrines,  
When the convent thresholds are gory,  
And quaffed are the convent wines :  
When our beasts with pillage are laden,  
And the clouds of our black smoke  
rise  
From yon tower, one fair-haired maiden  
Is singled as Osric's prize.  
I will fit her with chain and collar  
Of red gold, studded with pearls ;  
With bracelet of gold, Sir Scholar,  
The queen of my captive girls.

*Hugo (savagely)*

May the Most High God of battles,  
The Lord and Ruler of fights,  
Who breaketh the shield that rattles,  
Who snappeth the sword that smites,  
In whose hands are footmen and horse-  
men,  
At whose breath they conquer or flee,  
Never show me His mercy, Norseman !  
If I show mercy to thee.

*Osric*

What, ho ! art thou drunk, Sir Norman ?  
Has the wine made thy pale cheek red ?  
Now, I swear by Odin and Thor, man,  
Already I count thee dead.

*Rudolph*

I crave thy pardon for baulking  
The flood of thine eloquence,  
But thou canst not scare us with talking,  
I therefore pray thee go hence.

*Osric*

Though I may not take up thy gauntlet,  
Should we meet where the steel strikes fire,  
'Twixt thy casque and thy charger's frontlet  
The choice will perplex thy squire.

*Hugo*

When the Norman rowels are goading,  
When glitters the Norman glaive,  
Thou shalt call upon Thor and Odin :  
They shall not hear thee nor save.  
'Should we meet !' Aye, the chance may fall so,  
In the furious battle drive,  
So may God deal with me—more, also !  
If we separate, both alive !

*Scene*—THE COURT-YARD OF THE OLD FARM

EUSTACE and other followers of HUGO and ERIC lounging about. Enter THURSTON hastily, with swords under his arm.

*Thurston*

Now saddle your horses and girth them tight,  
And see that your weapons are sharp and bright.  
Come, lads, get ready as fast as you can.

*Eustace*

Why, what 's this bustle about, old man ?

*Thurston*

Well, it seems Lord Hugo has changed his mind,  
As the weathercock veers with the shifting wind ;

He has gone in person to Osric's camp,  
To tell him to pack up his tents and tramp !  
But I guess he won't.

*Eustace*

Then I hope he will.  
They are plenty to eat us, as well as to kill.

*Ralph*

And I hope he won't—I begin to feel  
A longing to moisten my thirsty steel.  
[*They begin to saddle and make preparations  
for a skirmish.*]

*Thurston*

I've a couple of blades to look to here.  
In their scabbards I scarcely could make them  
stir  
At first, but I'll sharpen them both ere long.

*A Man-at-arms*

Hurrah for a skirmish ! Who'll give us a song ?

*Thurston (sings, cleaning and sharpening)*

Hurrah ! for the sword ! I hold one here,  
And I scour at the rust, and say,  
'Tis the umpire this, and the arbiter,  
That settles in the fairest way ;  
For it stays false tongues and it cools hot blood,  
And it lowers the proud one's crest ;  
And the law of the land is sometimes good, .  
But the law of the sword is best.  
In all disputes 'tis the shortest plan,  
The surest and best appeal ;—  
What else can decide between man and man ?

*(Chorus of all)*

Hurrah ! for the bright blue steel !

*Thurston (sings)*

Hurrah ! for the sword of Hugo, our lord !  
'Tis a trusty friend and a true ;  
It has held its own on a grassy sward,  
When its blade shone bright and blue.  
Though it never has stricken in anger hard,  
And has scarcely been cleansed from rust,  
Since the day when it broke through Harold's  
guard  
With our favourite cut and thrust ;  
Yet Osric's crown will look somewhat red,  
And his brain will be apt to reel,  
Should the trenchant blade come down on his  
head—

*(Chorus of all)*

Hurrah ! for the bright blue steel !

*Thurston (sings)*

Hurrah ! for the sword of our ally bold,  
It has done good service to him ;  
It has held its own on an open wold,  
When its edge was in keener trim.  
It may baffle the plots of the wisest skull,  
It may slacken the strongest limb,  
Make the brains full of forethought void and  
null,  
And the eyes full of farsight dim ;  
And the hasty hands are content to wait,  
And the knees are compelled to kneel,  
Where it falls with the weight of a down-  
stroke straight—

*(Chorus of all)*

Hurrah ! for the bright blue steel !

*Thurston (sings)*

Hurrah ! for the sword—I 've one of my own ;  
And I think I may safely say,  
Give my enemy his, let us stand alone,  
And our quarrel shall end one way :  
One way or the other—it matters not much,  
So the question be fairly tried,  
Oh ! peacemaker good, bringing peace with a  
touch,  
Thy clients will be satisfied.  
As a judge, thou dost judge—as a witness, attest,  
And thou settest thy hand and seal,  
And the winner is blest, and the loser at rest—

*(Chorus of all)*

Hurrah ! for the bright blue steel !  
[*Hugo and Eric enter during the last  
verse of the song.*]

*Hugo*

Boot and saddle, old friend,  
Their defiance they send ;  
Time is short—make an end  
Of thy song.  
Let the sword in this fight  
Strike as hard for the right  
As it once struck for might  
Leagued with wrong.

Ha ! Rollo, thou champest  
Thy bridle and stampest,  
For the rush of the tempest  
Dost long ?  
Ho ! the kites will grow fatter  
On the corpses we scatter,  
In the paths where we shatter  
Their throng.

'Where Osric, the craven,  
 Hath reared the black raven  
 'Gainst monks that are shaven  
     And cowed :  
 Where the Teuton and Hun sit  
 In the track of our onset,  
 Will the wolves, ere the sunset  
     Have howled.

Retribution is good,  
 They have revelled in blood,  
 Like the wolves of the wood  
     They have prowled.  
 Birds of prey they have been.  
 And of carrion unclean,  
 And their own nests (I ween)  
     They have fouled.

*Eric*

Two messengers since  
 Yesternorn have gone hence,  
 And ere long will the Prince  
     Bring relief.  
 Shall we pause ?—they are ten  
 To our one, but their men  
 Are ill-armed, and scarce ken  
     Their own chief ;  
 And for this we give thanks :  
 Their disorderly ranks,  
 If assailed in the flanks,  
     Will as lief  
 Run as fight—loons and lords.

*Hugo*

Mount your steeds ! draw your swords !  
 Take your places ! My words  
     Shall be brief  
 Ride round by the valley,



Through pass and gorge sally—  
The linden trees rally

Beneath.

Then, Eric and Thurston,  
Their ranks while we burst on,  
Try which will be first on  
The heath.

(*Aside*)

Look again, mother mine,  
Through the happy starshine,  
For my sins dost thou pine ?

With my breath,

See ! thy pangs are all done,  
For the life of thy son :  
Thou shalt never feel one

For his death.

[*They all go out but Hugo, who lingers to tighten his girths. Orion appears suddenly in the gateway.*]

*Orion*

Stay, friend ! I keep guard on  
Thy soul's gate ; hold hard on  
Thy horse. Hope of pardon

Hath fled !

Bethink once, I crave thee,  
Can recklessness save thee ?  
Hell sooner will have thee

Instead.

*Hugo*

Back ! My soul, tempest tossed,  
Hath her Rubicon crossed ;  
She shall fly—saved or lost !

Void of dread !

Sharper pang than the steel,  
Thou, O serpent ! shalt feel,  
Should I set the bruised heel

On thy head.

[*He rides out.*]

*Scene*—A ROOM IN THE CONVENT TOWER  
OVERLOOKING THE GATE

URSULA *at the window.* AGATHA and Nuns *crouching  
or kneeling in a corner.*

*Ursula*

SEE, Ellinor ! Agatha ! Anna !

While yet for the ladders they wait,  
Jarl Osric hath reared the black banner

Within a few yards of the gate ;  
It faces our window, the raven,

The badge of the cruel sea-kings,  
That has carried to harbour and haven

Destruction and death on its wings.  
Beneath us they throng, the fierce Norsemen,

The pikemen of Rudolph behind  
Are mustered, and Dagobert's horsemen,

With faces to rearward inclined,  
Come last, on their coursers broad-chested,  
Rough-coated, short-pasterned, and strong,  
Their casques with white plumes thickly crested,  
Their lances barb-headed and long.

They come through the shades of the linden,  
Fleet riders and warhorses hot :

The Normans, our friends—we have sinned in  
Our selfishness, sisters, I wot—

They come to add slaughter to slaughter,  
Their handful can ne'er stem the tide

Of our foes, and our fate were but shorter  
Without them. How fiercely they ride !

And ' Hugo of Normandy ! ' ' Hugo ! '

' A rescue ! a rescue ! ' rings loud,  
And right on the many the few go !

A sway and a swerve of the crowd !  
A springing and sparkling of sword-blades !  
A crashing and countering of steeds !

And the white feathers fly 'neath their broad  
blades

Like foam-flakes ! the spear-shafts like reeds !

*A Nun (to Agatha)*

Pray, sister !

*Agatha*

Alas ! I have striven  
To pray, but the lips move in vain  
When the heart with such terror is riven.  
Look again, Lady Abbess ! Look again !

*Ursula*

As leaves fall by wintry gusts scattered,  
As fall by the sickle ripe ears,  
As the pines by the whirlwind fall shattered,  
As shattered by bolt fall the firs—  
To the right hand they fall ! to the left hand  
They yield ! They go down ! they give back !  
And their ranks are divided and cleft, and  
Dispersed and destroyed in the track !  
Where, stirrup to stirrup, and bridle  
To bridle, down-trampling the slain !  
Our friends, wielding swords never idle,  
Hew bloody and desperate lane  
Through pikemen, so crowded together  
They scarce for their pikes can find room,  
Led by Hugo's gilt crest, the tall feather  
Of Thurston, and Eric's black plume !

*A Nun (to Agatha)*

Pray, sister !

*Agatha*

First pray thou that heaven  
Will lift this dull weight from my brain,  
That crushes like crime unforgiven.  
Look again, Lady Abbess ! Look again !

*Ursula*

Close under the gates men are fighting  
On foot where the raven is reared !  
'Neath that sword-stroke, through helm and skull  
    smiting,  
    Jarl Osric falls, cloven to the beard !  
And Hugo, the hilt firmly grasping,  
    His heel on the throat of his foe,  
Wrenches back. I can hear the dull rasping,  
    The steel through the bone grating low !  
And the raven rocks ! Thurston has landed  
    Two strokes, well directed and hard,  
On the standard pole, wielding, two-handed,  
    A blade crimsoned up to the guard.  
Like the mast cut in two by the lightning,  
    The black banner topples and falls !  
Bewildering ! back-scattering ! affrightening !  
    It clears a wide space next the walls.

*A Nun (to Agatha)*

Pray, sister !

*Agatha*

Does the sinner unshriven,  
With naught beyond this life to gain,  
Pray for mercy on earth or in heaven ?  
    Look again, Lady Abbess ! Look again !

*Ursula*

The gates are flung open, and straightway,  
By Ambrose and Cyril led on,  
Our own men rush out through the gateway ;  
    One charge, and the entrance is won !  
No ! our foes block the gate and endeavour  
    To force their way in ! Oath and yell,  
Shout and war-cry wax wilder than ever !  
    Those children of Odin fight well ;

And my ears are confused by the crashing,  
The jarring, the discord, the din ;  
And mine eyes are perplexed by the flashing  
Of fierce lights that ceaselessly spin ;  
So when thunder to thunder is calling,  
Quick flash follows flash in the shade,  
So leaping and flashing and falling  
Blade flashes and follows on blade !  
While the sword, newly ploughed, freshly painted,  
Grows purple with blood of the slain,  
And slippery ! Has Agatha fainted ?

*Agatha*

Not so, Lady Abbess ! Look again !

*Ursula*

No more from the window ; in the old years  
I have looked upon strife. Now I go  
To the court-yard to rally our soldiers  
As I may—face to face with the foe.  
[*She goes out.*]

*Scene*—A ROOM IN THE CONVENT

THURSTON *seated near a small fire.*

*Enter Eustace*

*Eustace*

WE have come through this skirmish with hardly a scratch.

*Thurston*

And without us, I fancy, they have a full batch  
Of sick men to look to. Those robbers accursed  
Will soon put our soundest on terms with our worst.  
Nathless I'd have bartered, with never a frown,  
Ten years for those seconds when Osric went down.  
Where 's Ethelwolf ?

*Eustace*

Dying.

*Thurston*

And Reginald ?

*Eustace*

Dead.

And Ralph is disabled, and Rudolph is sped.  
He may last till midnight — not longer. Nor  
Tyrrel,  
Nor Brian, will ever see sunrise.

*Thurston*

That Cyril,

The monk, is a very respectable fighter.

*Eustace*

Not bad for a monk. Yet our loss had been  
lighter

Had he and his fellows thrown open the gate  
A little more quickly. And now, spite of fate,  
With thirty picked soldiers their siege we might  
weather,

But the Abbess is worth all the rest put together.

[*Enter Ursula.*]

*Thurston*

Here she comes.

*Ursula*

Can I speak with your lord ?

*Eustace*

'Tis too late,

He was dead when we carried him in at the gate.

*Thurston*

Nay, he spoke after that, for I heard him myself ;  
But he won't speak again, he must lie on his shelf.

*Ursula*

Alas ! is he dead, then ?

*Thurston*

As dead as St. Paul.

And what then ? to-morrow, we, too, one and all,  
Die, to fatten these ravenous carrion birds.

I knelt down by Hugo and heard his last words :  
' How heavy the night hangs—how wild the waves  
dash ;

Say a mass for my soul—and give Rollo a mash.'

*Ursula*

Nay, Thurston, thou jestest.

*Thurston*

Ask Eric. I swear

We listened and caught every syllable clear.

*Eustace*

Why, his horse was slain, too.

*Thurston*

'Neath the linden trees grey,

Ere the onset, young Henry rode Rollo away ;

He will hasten the Prince, and they may reach your  
gate

To-morrow—though to-morrow for us is too late.

Hugo rode the boy's mare, and she's dead, if you  
like—

Disembowelled by the thrust of a freebooter's pike.

*Eustace*

Neither Henry nor Rollo we ever shall see.

*Ursula*

But we may hold the walls till to-morrow.

*Thurston*

Not we.

In an hour or less, having rallied their force,  
They'll storm your old building—and take it of  
course,  
Since of us, who alone in war's science are skilled,  
One-third are disabled, and two-thirds are killed.

*Ursula*

Art thou hurt ?

*Thurston*

At present I feel well enough,  
But your water is brackish, unwholesome and  
rough ;  
Bring a flask of your wine, dame, for Eustace and I,  
Let us gaily give battle and merrily die.

*[Enter Eric, with arm in sling.]*

*Eric*

Thou art safe, Lady Abbess ! The convent is safe !  
To be robbed of their prey, how the ravens will  
chafe !

The vanguard of Otto is looming in sight :  
At the sheen of their spears, see ! thy foemen take  
flight.

Their foremost are scarce half a mile from the wall.

*Thurston*

Bring the wine, lest those Germans should swallow  
it all.

*Scene—THE CHAPEL OF THE CONVENT*

*(Dirge of the Monks)*

Earth to earth, and dust to dust,  
Ashes unto ashes go.  
Judge not. He who judgeth just,  
Judgeth merciful also.



Earthly penitence hath fled,  
 Earthly sin hath ceased to be ;  
 Pile the sods on heart and head,  
*Miserere Domine !*

*Hominum et angelorum,  
 Domine ! precamur te  
 Ut immemor sis malorum—  
 Miserere Domine !  
 (Miserere !)*

Will the fruits of life brought forth,  
 Pride and greed, and wrath and lust,  
 Profit in the day of wrath,  
 When the dust returns to dust ?  
 Evil flower and thorny fruit  
 Load the wild and worthless tree,  
 Lo ! the axe is at the root,  
*Miserere Domine !*

*Spes, fidesque, caritasque,  
 Frustra fatigant per se,  
 Frustra virtus, forsque, fasque,  
 Miserere Domine !  
 (Miserere !)*

Fair without and foul within,  
 When the honeyed husks are reft  
 From the bitter sweets of sin,  
 Bitterness alone is left ;  
 Yet the wayward soul hath striven  
 Mostly hell's ally to be,  
 In the strife 'twixt hell and heaven,  
*Miserere Domine !*

*Heu ! heu ! herbâ latet anguis—  
 Caro herba—carni vœ—  
 Solum purgat, Christi sanguis,  
 Miserere Domine !  
 (Miserere !)*

Pray that in the doubtful fight  
Man may win through sore distress,  
By His goodness infinite,  
And His mercy fathomless.  
Pray for one more of the weary,  
Head bowed down and bended knee,  
Swell the requiem, *Miserere !*  
*Miserere Domine !*

*Bonum, malum, qui fecisti*  
*Mali imploramus te,*  
*Salve fratrem, causâ Christi,*  
*Miserere Domine !*  
*(Miserere !)*

## Part VIII

*Poems not included in the Collected Poems  
edited by Marcus Clarke*<sup>1</sup>

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### THE DEATH OF NELSON<sup>2</sup>

'Twas midst the battle's echoing din  
And the cannon's thundering roar,  
When brave men fought to die or win  
And the decks ran red with gore ;  
When the fleets of England, France, and Spain  
Were joined in desperate fight ;  
When fell the leaden shot like rain,  
And flashed the cutlass bright ;

When the iron ball's resistless sway  
Through sheet and rigging passed,  
And through the swelling sails made way  
And split the towering mast ;  
When the tumult of the contest's swell  
Reached to the shore,  
'Twas then in victory's arms he fell—  
He fell to rise no more.

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<sup>1</sup> The late Marcus Clarke's edition was published in Melbourne after Gordon's death. The poems in Part VIII. of this volume, and the Bush Songs which follow, form chapters xx. and xxi in *Adam Lindsay Gordon and his Friends in England and Australia*, by Edith M. Humphris and Douglas Sladen, just published by Constable and Co.

<sup>2</sup> A poem of A. L. Gordon's, never published in any form, preserved by Miss Frances Gordon in an album in which Gordon wrote it with his own hand. Given by her permission. Written in England not later than 1853

And will he never, never rise,  
That spirit bold and true ?  
Has he for ever closed his eyes  
And bid this world adieu ?  
And where, oh, where shall England find  
'Mong all her many brave,  
A soul so generous and so kind  
In hour of need to save.

Thou mayst on bygone times look back  
With conscience bright and clear,  
No mad ambition made thy track  
A selfish, vain career.  
Thy country's safety thou didst guard,  
Her honour was thy care,  
Her foeman's course thou didst retard  
And made her prospects fair :

And couldst thou live and yet return  
Back to thy grateful land,  
I ween each English heart would burn  
To clasp thee by the hand ;  
And highest honour thou wouldst hold  
And most revered wouldst be,  
Midst all that loyal race and bold—  
The Saxon chivalry.

While England's lovely fair ones too  
On thee would brightly smile,  
And hail with joy the guardian true  
Of their unconquered isle.  
But no, alas ! the thought is vain,  
Thy course on earth is o'er,  
And thou wilt never rise again  
Nor see thy country more.

Yet wherefore shouldst thou be delayed  
In this dark world of ours,  
Whose brightest paths are marked with shade,  
And false its fairest flowers ?

'The hero in his cabin lies,  
While round him mutely stand  
With throbbing hearts and tearful eyes  
A sad but silent band ;

But now his gallant mates have hurled  
Destruction on their foes,  
And through the fleet like lightning whirled  
The shout of victory goes.  
The conqueror gazed upon his sword :  
'My earthly race is run' ;  
Then faintly murmured, 'Thank my God,  
My duty I have done.'

The sun on high with golden light  
Streaks through the cabin now,  
And for an instant flickers bright  
On Nelson's pallid brow.  
The dying man looked up and smiled,  
One long look round him cast,  
And from that scene of carnage wild  
The soul to heaven passed.

ARGEMONE<sup>1</sup>

THE terrible night-watch is over,  
I turn where I lie,  
To eastward my dim eyes discover  
Faint streaks in the sky ;  
Faint streaks on a faint light, that dapples  
And dawns like the ripening of apples,  
Day closes with darkness and grapples,  
And darkness must die.

---

<sup>1</sup> Written for Miss Riddoch. Given for publication by George Riddoch, Esq , and reprinted from *The Australasian*

And the dawn finds us where the dusk found us,  
     The quick and the dead ;  
 Thou dawn staying darkness around us,  
     Oh, slay me instead !  
 Thou pitiless earth, that would sever  
 Twain souls, reuniting them never,  
 Oh, gape and engulf me for ever !  
     Oh, cover my head !

The toils that men strive with stout-hearted,  
     The fears that men fly,  
 I have known them ; but these have departed,  
     And those have gone by.  
 Men, toiling and straining and striving,  
 Are glad, peradventure, for living ;  
 I render for life no thanksgiving,  
     Glad only to die.

For alike now to me are all changes,  
     Naught gladdens, naught grieves ;  
 Alike now pale snow on the ranges,  
     Pale gold on the sheaves ;  
 Alike now the hum of glad bees on  
 Green boughs, and the sigh of sad trees on  
 Sere uplands, the fall of the season,  
     And the fall of the leaves.

Alike now each wind blows the breezes  
     That kiss where they roam,  
 The breath of the March wind that freezes  
     In rime on the loam ;  
 The storm-blast that lashes and scourges,  
 And rends the white crest of the surges,  
 As it sweeps with a thunder of dirges  
     Across the sea-foam.

Alike now all rainfall and dewfall,  
     Foul seasons and fair ;  
 Let the rose on my path or the rue fall,  
     I heed not nor care ;

Nor for red light of dawn, nor for dun light  
Of dusk, nor for dazzle of sunlight  
At noon, shall I seek light or shun light,  
Seek warmth or shun glare.

Now for breaking of fast neither grateful,  
Nor for quenching of thirst,  
In the dawn or the eventide hateful,  
In the noontide accursed.  
In the watch of the night, sleep forsaken,  
Till the sleep comes no watch shall awaken,  
Be the best things of life never taken,  
Never feared be the worst.

Skies laugh and buds bloom, and birds warble  
At breaking of day ;  
Without and within on grey marble  
The light glimmers grey.  
Ah, pale silent mouth, surely this is  
The spot where death strikes and life misses,  
Warm lips pressing cold lips—waste kisses—  
Clay cold on cold clay.

Through sunset and twilight and nightfall  
And night-watches bleak,  
We have lain thus, and broad rays of light fall  
And flicker and streak.  
The death-chamber, glancing and shining,  
Where death and dead life lay reclining,  
My hands with her hands intertwining,  
My cheek to her cheek.

I conjure thee by days spent together,  
So sad and so few,  
By the seasons of fair and foul weather,  
By the rose and the rue ;  
By the sorrows and joys of past hours,  
By the thorns of the earth and the flowers,  
By the sun of the skies and the showers,  
By the mist and the dew ;

By the time that annihilates all things—  
     Our woes and our crimes,  
 By the gathering of great things and small things  
     At end of all times,  
 Let thy soul answer mine through the portal  
 Of the grave, if the soul be immortal,  
 As the wise men of all climes have taught all  
     The fools of all climes.

If these men speak truth I come quickly,  
     My life does thee wrong ;  
 Dost thou languish in shades peopled thickly  
     With phantoms that throng ?  
 Have they known thee, my love ? Hast thou  
     known one  
 To welcome the stranger, and lone one !—  
 O loved one ! O lost one ! mine own one !  
     I tarry not long.

The flowers that no more shall enwreath us  
     Turn sunward, the dove  
 Sails skyward, the flowers are beneath us,  
     The birds are above.  
 Those skies (an illegible letter)  
 Seem fairer and farther, scarce better  
 Than earth to men crushed by life's fetter  
     When lifeless is love.

And none can live twice, say the heathen,  
     And none can twice die,  
 More hopeful than these were are we then  
     With hopes past the sky !  
 Yon Judge, will He swerve from just sentence,  
 For tardy, fear-stricken repentance ?  
 Ask those who came hither and went hence,  
     But hope no reply.

And He who shall judge us is mighty,  
     How then shall I trust



In Him, having sinned in His sight ? He  
     Is jealous and just.  
 So priests taught me once, in their learning  
 Perplexed, slower still in discerning,  
 Are ashes to ashes returning,  
     And dust seeking dust.

But the dead, these are tranquil, or seem so,  
     Nor laugh they nor weep,  
 And I who rest not, though I dream so,  
     Ask only their sleep.  
 I have sown tares and brambles on fickle,  
 False sands, and already my sickle  
 Has reaped the rank weed and the prickle—  
     What more shall I reap ?

Can life thrive when life's love expires ?  
     Are life and love twain ?  
 Men say so—nay, all men are liars,  
     Or all lives are vain.  
 Let our dead loves and lives be forgotten,  
 With the ripening of fruits that are rotten,  
 So we, loving fools, dust-begotten,  
     Go dustward again.

THE FEUD: A BALLAD <sup>1</sup>

' THE DOWIE DENS O' YARROW '

## PLATE I

*Rixa super mero*

THEY sat by their wine in the tavern that night,  
 But not in good fellowship true ;  
 The Rhenish was strong and the Burgundy bright,  
 And hotter the argument grew.

---

<sup>1</sup> This ballad will be read with interest. The lines, which were written forty-eight years ago, and of which only thirty copies were printed, were produced under the following

'I asked your consent when I first sought her hand,  
Nor did you refuse to agree,  
Though her father declared that the half of his land  
Her dower at our wedding should be.'

'No dower shall be given (the brother replied)  
With a maiden of beauty so rare,  
Nor yet shall my father my birthright divide,  
Our lands with a foeman to share.'

The knight stood erect in the midst of the hall,  
And sterner his visage became,  
'Now shame and dishonour my scutcheon befall  
If thus I relinquish my claim.'

The brother then drained a tall goblet of wine,  
And fiercely this answer he made—  
'Before like a coward my rights I resign,  
I'll claim an appeal to the blade.

'The passes at Yarrow are rugged and wide,  
There meet me to-morrow alone,  
This quarrel we two with our swords will decide,  
And one shall his folly atone.'

---

circumstances.—Gordon, who at that time lived in the south-east, one night met a number of friends at the Mount Gambier Hotel, and during the evening his attention was drawn to a set of six plates illustrative of the old Border ballad, 'The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow,' engraved from pictures painted by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Noel Paton for the Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland, and issued to that association's subscribers. Gordon was much pleased with the plates, and intimated to one of the company his intention of using them as a basis for some lines. A day or two later he showed the poem to the gentleman he had spoken to, and an order was given to the proprietors of *The Border Watch* for thirty copies, with the stipulation that the authorship be kept secret. The lines were printed in pamphlet form, and were entitled 'The Feud: a Ballad,' and were dedicated by 'A Lindsay' to Noel Paton, R S A, as a key to the plates named. This is an exact copy of the poem as it was reprinted in *The Australasian*.

They've settled the time and they've settled the place,  
They've paid for the wine and the ale,  
They've bitten their gloves, and their steps they  
retrace.  
To their castles in Ettrick's Vale.

## PLATE II

*Morituri (te) salutant*

'Now buckle my broadsword at my side  
And saddle my trusty steed;  
And bid me adieu, my bonnie bride,  
To Yarrow I go with speed.

'I've passed through many a bloody fray  
Unharm'd in health or limb;  
Then why is your brow so sad this day  
And your dark eye so dim?'

'Oh, belt not on your broadsword bright,  
Oh, leave your steed in his stall,  
For I dreamt last night of a stubborn fight,  
And I dreamt I saw you fall.'

'On Yarrow's braes there will be strife,  
Yet I am safe from ill;  
And if I thought it would cost my life,  
I must take this journey still.'

He turned his charger to depart  
In the misty morning air,  
But he stood and pressed her to his heart  
And smoothed her glossy hair.

And her red lips he fondly kissed  
Beside the castle door,  
And he rode away in the morning mist,  
And he never saw her more!

## PLATE III

*Heu! deserta domus*

SHE sits by the eastern casement now,  
And the sunlight enters there  
And settles on her ivory brow  
And gleams in her golden hair.  
On the deerskin rug the staghound lies  
And dozes dreamily,  
And the quaint carved oak reflects the dyes  
Of the curtain's canopy.  
The lark has sprung from the new-mown hay,  
And the plover's note is shrill,  
And the song of the mavis far away  
Comes from the distant hill;  
And in the wide courtyard below  
She heard the horses neigh,  
The men-at-arms pass to and fro,  
The scraps of Border lay.  
She heard each boisterous oath and jest  
The rough moss-troopers made,  
Who scoured the rust from spur or crest,  
Or polished bit or blade.  
They loved her well, those rugged men—  
How could they be so gay  
When he perchance in some lone glen  
Lay dying far away?

She was a fearless Border girl,  
Who from her earliest days  
Had seen the banners oft unfurl  
And the war-beacons blaze—  
Had seen her father's men march out,  
Roused by the trumpet's call,  
And heard the foemen's savage shout  
Close to their fortress wall.

And when her kin were arming fast,  
Had belted many a brand—  
Why was her spirit now o'ercast ?  
Where was her self-command ?  
She strove to quell those childish fears,  
Unworthy of her name ;  
She dashed away the rising tears,  
And, flushed with pride and shame,  
She rose and hurried down the stair,  
The castle yard to roam ;  
And she met her elder sister there,  
Come from their father's home—

' Sister, I 've ridden here alone,  
Your lord and you to greet.'  
' Sister, to Yarrow he has gone  
Our brother there to meet.  
I dreamt last night of a stubborn fray  
Where I saw him fall and bleed,  
And he rode away at break of day  
With his broadsword and his steed.'  
' O sister dear, there will be strife,  
Our brother likes him ill,  
And one or both must forfeit life  
On Yarrow's lonely hill.'

A stout moss-trooper, standing near,  
Spoke with a careless smile—  
' Now have no fear for my master dear,  
He may travel many a mile,  
And those who ride on the Border side,  
Albeit they like him not,  
They know his mettle has oft been tried  
Where blows were thick and hot ;  
He left command that none should go  
From hence till home he came ;  
But, lady, the truth you soon shall know  
If you will bear the blame.

Your palfrey fair I'll saddle with care,  
Your sister shall ride the grey,  
And I'll mount myself on the sorrel mare,  
And to Yarrow we'll haste away.'

The sun was low in the western sky,  
And steep was the mountain track,  
But they rode from the castle rapidly—  
Oh! how will they travel back?

#### PLATE IV

##### *Gaudia certaminis*

HE came to the spot where his foe had agreed  
To meet him in Yarrow's dark glade,  
And there he drew rein and dismounted his steed,  
And fastened him under the shade.

Close by in the greenwood the ambush was set,  
And scarce had he entered the glen  
When, armed for the combat, the brother he met,  
And with him were eight of his men.

'Now swear to relinquish all claim to our land,  
Or to give as a hostage your bride!  
Or fly if you're able, or yield where you stand,  
Or die as your betters have died!'

His doublet and hat on the green sward he threw  
He wrapt round the left arm his cloak;  
And out of its scabbard his broadsword he drew,  
And stood with his back to an oak.

'My claim to your land I refuse to deny,  
Nor will I restore you my bride,  
Nor will I surrender, nor yet will I fly:  
Come on, and the steel shall decide!'

Oh, sudden and sure were the blows that he dealt,  
Like lightning the sweep of his blade;  
Cut and thrust, point and edge, all around him they  
fell,

They fell one by one in the glade.

And pierced in the gullet their leader goes down,  
And sinks with a curse on the plain;  
And his squire falls dead, cut through headpiece and  
crown,

And his groom by a back stroke is slain.

Now five are stretched lifeless, disabled are three,  
Hard pressed, see the last caitiff reel!  
The brother behind struggles up on one knee,  
And drives through his body the steel!

### PLATE V

*‘Non habeo mihi facta adhuc Herculis uxor credar :  
conjugii mors mihi pignus erit’*

THE traitor's father heard the tale,  
In haste he mounted then  
And spurred his horse from Ettrick Vale  
To Yarrow's lonely glen.

Some troopers followed in his track—  
For them he tarried not,  
He neither halted nor looked back  
Until he found the spot.

The earth was trod and trampled bare,  
And stained with dark red dew,  
A broken blade lay here, and there  
A bonnet cut in two;

And stretched in ghastly shapes around  
The lifeless corpses lie,  
Some with their faces to the ground,  
And some towards the sky.

And there the ancient border chief  
    Stood silent and alone—  
Too stubborn to give way to grief,  
    Too stern remorse to own.

A soldier in the midst of strife,  
    Since he had first drawn breath,  
He'd grown to undervalue life  
    And feel at home with death.

And yet he shuddered when he saw  
    The work that had been done ;  
He knew his fearless son-in-law,  
    He knew his dastard son.

Despite the failings of his race  
    A brave old man was he,  
Who would not stoop to actions base  
    And hated treachery.

He loved his younger daughter well,  
    And though severe and rude,  
For her sake he had tried to quell  
    That foolish Border feud.

Her brother all his schemes had marred,  
    And given his pledge the lie,  
And sense of justice struggled hard  
    With nature's stronger tie.

He knew his son had richly earned  
    The stroke that laid him low,  
Yet had not quite forgiveness learned  
    For him that dealt the blow.

There came a tramp of horses' feet,  
    He raised his startled eyes,  
And felt his pulses throb and beat  
    With sorrow and surprise.



He saw his daughter riding fast,  
And from her steed she sprung,  
And on her lover's corpse she cast  
Herself, and round him clung.

Her head she pillowed on his waist,  
And all her clustering hair  
Hung down, disordered by her haste,  
In silken masses there.

Her sister and their sturdy guide  
Dismounted and drew nigh,  
The elder daughter stood aside—  
Her tears fell silently.

The stout moss-trooper glanced around,  
But not a word he said,  
He knelt upon the battered ground  
And raised his master's head.

The face had set serene and sad,  
Nor was there on the clay  
The stamp of that fierce soul which had  
In anger passed away.

With dagger-blade he ripped the shirt,  
The fatal wound to show,  
And wiped the stains of blood and dirt  
From throat and cheek and brow.

And all the while she did not stir,  
She lay there calm and still,  
Nor could he hope to comfort her,  
Her case was past his skill.

The father first that silence broke ;  
His voice was firm and clear,  
And every accent that he spoke  
Fell on the listener's ear.

‘Daughter, this quarrel to forego  
I offered half our land  
As dower to him—a feudal foe—  
When first he sought your hand.

‘I only asked for some brief while,  
Some few short weeks’ delay,  
Till I my son could reconcile ;  
For this he would not stay.

‘He was your husband, so I ’m told,  
But you yourself must own  
He took you to his fortress hold  
With your consent alone.

‘Of late the strife broke out anew ;  
They blame your brother there ;  
But he was hot and headstrong too—  
He doubtless did his share.

‘Oh, stout of heart and strong of hand  
With all his faults was he ;  
The champion of his Border land ;  
I ne’er his judge will be !

‘Now grieve no more for what is done,  
Alike we share the cost ;  
For, girl, I too have lost a son,  
If you your love have lost.

‘Forget the dead, and learn to call  
A worthier man your lord  
Than he whose arm has vexed us all ;  
Here lies his fatal sword.

‘Think, when you seek his guilt to cloak,  
Whose blood has dyed it red,  
Who fell beneath its deadly stroke,  
Whose life is forfeited.’  
The old man paused, for while he spoke  
The girl had raised her head.

Her silken hair she proudly dashed  
Back from her crimson face,  
And in her bright eyes once more flashed  
The spirit of her race.  
Her beauty made him stand abashed !  
Her voice rang through the place !

‘ Who held the treacherous dagger’s hilt  
When against odds he fought ?  
My brother’s blood was fairly spilt,  
But his was basely bought !  
Now Christ absolve his soul from guilt ;  
He sinned as he was taught !

‘ His next of kin by blood and birth  
May claim his house and land ;  
His groom may black his saddle-girth,  
Or bid his charger stand,  
But never a man on God’s wide earth  
Shall touch his darling’s hand ! ’

The colour faded from her cheek,  
Her eyelids drooped and fell,  
And when again she sought to speak,  
Her accents came so low and weak  
Her words they scarce could tell.

‘ O Father, all I ask is rest,  
Here let me once more lie ! ’  
She stretched upon the dead man’s breast  
With one long weary sigh,  
And the old man bowed his lofty crest  
And hid his troubled eye.

They called her, but she spoke no more,  
And when they raised her head  
She seemed as lovely as before,  
Though all her bloom had fled ;  
But they grew pale at what they saw—  
They knew that she was dead !

## PLATE VI

*Dies iræ ! dies illa*

THE requiem breaks the midnight air, the funeral bell  
 they toll,  
 A mass or prayer we well may spare for a brave  
 moss-trooper's soul ;  
 And the fairest bride on the Border side, may she too  
 be forgiven.  
 The dirge we ring, the chant we sing, the rest we leave  
 to Heaven !

TWO UNPUBLISHED POEMS<sup>1</sup>

## I

JONES plays the deuce with his grammar,  
 Knocks time and tense into tin-tacks ;  
 Brown, the big Visigoth, wielding blunt hammer,  
 Mauls right and left the Queen's syntax.

I may be only a rhymers—  
 (Where the fire fails let the ice lie)—  
 Brown, come and lend me a rhyme—' Oh, Jemimer ! '  
 Thank you, Brown ; that will do nicely.

Brown had us down—we outlive it—  
 Possibly Brown may be under  
 Some day. We neither take quarter nor give it ;  
 Brown finds it warm—what's the wonder ?

You storm Parnassus and Helicon,  
 Climb you the hill—overcome it,  
 Top it. Why, then you can sit like a pelican  
 Sticking your beak in the summit.

---

<sup>1</sup> Given by the kind permission of Mr. W. Farmer Whyte of Sydney. These poems form part of the Gordon MSS. recently purchased by Mr. Whyte from Gordon's latest land-lady, Mrs. Kelly, at Brighton, Victoria

Then you will not be contented !

Many things here are worth winning ;  
Nothing once won is worth prizing. Who scented  
Fame first ? Who had the last inning ?

Brown shakes his head : ' This is temper :

Mere spleen for loss of the last trick.'

Juvenile Mark mutters sagely (*sic semper*),

' Great is the juice that is gastric.'

Yes, I confess, Aristophanes

Yesterday puzzled me sadly ;

Sybil last Tuesday took all the hair off her knees

Rushing that paling so madly.

Courage ! I 'd sold little Sybil ;

Certes ! yon Greek was a pagan ;

I shall get over my grief ; I shall scribble—

Do some more discount with Fagan.

I with these verse freaks I care for,

You with those flights as a poet,

Maybe some day we shall both know the wherefore ;

Maybe we never shall know it.

## II

WHENEVER you meet with a man from home

Who laughs at the falls and the fences here,

Who tells you of crackers through clay or loam,

And of gallops with Goodman and Olliver,

You may bet your life such a man won't ride

Here—it can hardly be worth his while ;

Under a bushel his light he 'll hide,

And we are not worthy to watch his style !

There 's What-do-you-call-him, Old England—he

Who worried us with ' Colonial Bounce,'

Having seen such wonders across the sea,

He might surely show us the way for once.

What a treat to see him in tights and boots,  
 Careering over a big 'blue gum'  
 In the pigskin—only we breed such brutes;  
 I can hardly hope such a treat will come.

An historian, 'Bernal Diaz,' who names  
 One on a white horse seen with his eyes,  
 Says, 'It might have been the blessed Saint  
 James,

Whom I was not worthy to recognise'—  
 And I once saw one whom nobody knew,  
 On a white horse, wearing a horrible hat;  
 So, I may have seen Old England too,  
 And, like Bernal, been no better for that.

### THE PATROL [GORDON] AND THE GOLD-DIGGER <sup>1</sup>

*An Episode in the Life of the Poet while in the  
 Mounted Police Force in Australia*

GORDON, *mounted, loq.*—

Ho! you chap of grit and sinew,  
 Smoking in your pit,  
 Why thus labour discontinue?  
 Why your forehead knit?

Are you weary of the searching  
 For the Root of Ill,  
 That you, like an idle urchin,  
 Play at sitting still?

---

<sup>1</sup> By kind permission of the editor of *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* I am able to give this little monologue in rhyme, handed to a predecessor as one of Gordon's unpublished and evidently incomplete compositions. It is taken from an article by 'Small Hopes'. It seems to be either the original draft or a parody of *Fins Exoptatus*.

I confess it hardish lines is  
Not to earn a mopus :  
Galling—ne'er to get a *Finis*  
*Coronare Opus.*

Catch this flask of old Jamaica  
In your iron paw,  
While I fill a pipe and take a  
Seat to have a jaw.

Let me hitch my horse's bridle  
To this stunted tree :  
Now, instead of one chap idle,  
We can reckon three.

. . . . .

*They have a jaw. Presently the Patrol rises to depart, and, loq.—*

Well ! there 's much truth underlying  
That old growl I 've heard.  
I shan't please you by replying,  
Yet I 'll have a word.

Growl away, but live and labour  
Till your race be run,  
Helping every feeble neighbour,  
Seeking help from none.

Life is mainly froth and bubble,  
Two things stand like stone ;—  
KINDNESS IN A NEIGHBOUR'S TROUBLE.  
COURAGE IN YOUR OWN.

Though we chafe at duty's rigour,  
All is for the best.  
You will work with greater vigour,  
Having had a rest.

Fortune's lap has prizes in it  
Yet for you in store.  
Who knows ? In another minute  
You may strike the ore.

Now I'm off with my old kicker,  
On my daily task.  
Stay ! Since you have paunched the  
liquor,  
Hand me back that flask.

### AN UNFINISHED POEM <sup>1</sup>

ALL night I've heard the marsh-frog's croak,  
The jay's rude matins now prevail,  
The smouldering fire of bastard oak  
Now blazes, freshened by the gale ;  
And now to eastward, far away  
Beyond the range, a tawny ray  
Of orange reddens on the grey,  
And stars are waning pale.

We mustered once when skies were red,  
Nine leagues from here across the  
plain,  
And when the sun broiled overhead,  
Rode with wet heel and wanton rein.  
The wild scrub cattle held their own,  
I lost my mates, my horse fell blown,  
Night came, I slept here all alone,  
At sunrise riding on again,  
I heard yon creek's refrain.

---

<sup>1</sup> Given to me by Mr. Lambton L. Mount under the circumstances mentioned in the Introduction.



Can this be where the hovel stood ?  
Of old I knew the spot right well ;  
One post is left of all the wood,  
Three stones lie where the chimney  
fell.  
Rank growth of ferns has well-nigh shut  
From sight the ruins of the hut.  
There stands the tree where once I cut  
The M that interlaced the L—  
What more is left to tell ?

Aye, yonder in the blackwood shade,  
The wife was busy with her churn ;  
The sturdy sunburnt children played  
In yonder patch of tangled fern.  
The man was loitering to feed  
His flock on yonder grassy mead ;  
And where the wavelet threads the weed  
I saw the eldest daughter turn,  
The stranger's quest to learn.

Shone, golden-sprinkled by the sun,  
Her wanton wealth of back-blown hair,  
Soft silver ripples danced and spun  
All round her ankles bright and bare.  
My speech she barely understood,  
And her reply was brief and rude ;  
Yet God, they say, made all things good  
That He at first made fair.

. . . . .<sup>1</sup>

She bore a pitcher in her hand  
Along that shallow slender streak

---

<sup>1</sup> The manuscript here is rather blurred and indistinct, and probably the author's words are not accurately copied, as the sense is rather vague.

Of shingle-coated shelving sand  
That splits two channels of the creek ;  
She plunged it where the current whirls,  
Then poised it on her sunny curls ;  
Waste water decked with sudden pearls  
Her glancing arm and glowing cheek.  
What more is left to speak ?

It matters not how I became  
The guest of those who lived here then ;  
I now can scarce recall the name  
Of this old station ; long years, ten  
Or twelve it may be, have flown past,  
And many things have changed since last  
I left the spot, for years fly fast,  
And heedless boys grow haggard men  
Ere they the change can ken.

The spells of those old summer days  
With glory still the passes deck,  
The sweet green hills still bloom and  
blaze  
With crimson gold and purple fleck.  
For these I neither crave nor care,  
And yet the flowers perchance are fair  
As when I twined them in her hair,  
Or strung them chainwise round her  
neck.

What now is left to reck ?

The pure clear streamlet undefiled  
Durgles the flowery upland yet ;  
It lisps and prattles like a child,  
And laughs, and makes believe to fret,  
O'erflowing rushes rank and high ;  
And on its dimpled breast may lie  
The lizard and the dragonfly.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The manuscript, which is carelessly written and unrevised, abruptly leaves off here.

FRAGMENTS <sup>1</sup>

TO CHARLEY WALKER

WHEREAS ! L. Gordon *having gone away*  
*Sundry and diverse debts has failed to pay,*  
 By virtue of the law we here decree  
 That all his goods shall confiscated be.  
 And since, *by reason of his tender age,*  
 His creditors, their grievance to assuage  
 (Albeit they have cause for just complaint),  
 Upon his person can put no restraint,  
 Nor cause him to be pulled up at the sessions,  
 We hereby give them claim to his possessions.

*Reply to the above Paragraph*

Whereas L. Gordon—be it understood—  
 Hath got no goods *that be of any good,*  
 His creditors from Draper down to Clee  
*To all the goods aforesaid welcome be !*  
 And when they've nailed what comes within their  
     range,  
 The *surplus* they may keep and grab the *change* ;  
 And much he hopes, when they *thereof* partake,  
 Beasts of themselves *therewith* they will not make.

TO THE SAME

CHARLEY ! Here I am at last  
     Quartered in my old position,  
 Though from having lived so fast  
     I'm in rather poor condition.  
 Came by train to save my feet,  
     On a walk I wasn't nuts,  
 Got home drowsy, crabbed and beat,  
     *Pockets empty, ditto guts.*

---

<sup>1</sup> The four fragments annexed, taken from Gordon's letters to Charley Walker, must be among the earliest of his poems.

## TO THE SAME

PUT no faith in aught you meet with, *friends or lovers,*  
     new or old,  
 Never trust the gamest racehorse that was ever  
     reared or foaled.  
 If you find your lady fickle, *take it cool and never heed;*  
 If you get a bill delivered, *roll it up and light your weed.*  
 If a foe insults your honour, *hit out straight and wop*  
     *him well;*  
 If your thickest friend turns rusty, *tell him he may go*  
     *to hell.*  
 Fame is folly, honour madness, love delusion, friend-  
     ship sham,  
 Pleasure paves the way for sadness, none of these are  
     worth a d—n.  
 But a stout heart proof 'gainst fate is, where there  
     can be nothing more done,  
 This advice is given gratis, by Yrs. truly, Landsay  
     Gordon.  
 What if friends desert in trouble? Fortune can recall  
     them yet—  
*Faithful in champagne and sunshine, false in clouds and*  
     *heavy wet.*  
 Who would trust in mankind's daughter, since by  
     Eve our fall was planned?—  
 Woman's love is writ on water, woman's faith is  
     traced on sand.  
 Fame is folly, etc.

TO A. PATCHETT MARTIN<sup>1</sup>

I 'VE something of the bulldog in my breed,  
     The spaniel is developed rather less,  
 While life is in me I can fight and bleed,  
     But never the chastising hand caress.

---

<sup>1</sup> These four lines, written in Cheltenham and sent to the late Patchett Martin, are included in *Thickheaded Thoughts*.

A HUNTING RHYME<sup>1</sup>

THERE's lots of refusing and falls and mishaps,  
 Who's down on the Chestnut? He's hurt himself  
     p'raps.  
 'Oh, it's Lindsay the Lanky,' says Hard-riding Bob,  
 'He's luckily saved Mr. Calcraft a job.'

A TRANSLATION<sup>2</sup>

*Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes  
 Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.*

To rightly learn the pugilistic art,  
 Such as Jem Earywig can well impart,  
 Refines the manners and takes off the rough,  
 Nor suffers one to be a blooming muff.

GORDON'S VALEDICTORY POEM<sup>3</sup>

LAY me low, my work is done;  
 I am weary. Lay me low,  
 Where the wild flowers woo the sun,  
 Where the balmy breezes blow,  
 Where the butterfly takes wing,  
 Where the aspens, drooping, grow,  
 Where the young birds chirp and sing—  
 I am weary, let me go.

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Our correspondent,' says *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 'recalls a rhyme which was curiously enough written by Gordon (1852) about himself and his companions in the hunting-field, in which arena, however, he got very little experience.' Lindsay Gordon took the effect out of adverse criticisms on the part of the rest of his comrades by severely criticising himself.

<sup>2</sup> One of Gordon's earliest surviving rhymes is this free translation.

<sup>3</sup> This poem was given to me for inclusion in my *Anthology, Australian Poets*.

I have striven hard and long  
In the world's unequal fight,  
Always to resist the wrong,  
Always to maintain the right.  
Always with a stubborn heart,  
Taking, giving blow for blow ;  
Brother, I have played my part,  
And am weary, let me go.

Stern the world and bitter cold,  
Irksome, painful to endure ;  
Everywhere a love of gold,  
Nowhere pity for the poor.  
Everywhere mistrust, disguise,  
Pride, hypocrisy, and show,  
Draw the curtain, close mine eyes,  
I am weary, let me go.

Other chance when I am gone  
May restore the battle-call,  
Bravely lead the good cause on  
Fighting in the which I fall.  
God may quicken some true soul  
Here to take my place below  
In the heroes' muster-roll—  
I am weary, let me go.

Shield and buckler, hang them up,  
Drape the standards on the wall,  
I have drained the mortal cup  
To the finish, dregs and all ;  
When our work is done 'tis best,  
Brother, best that we should go—  
I am weary, let me rest,  
I am weary, lay me low.

TO MY SOUL<sup>1</sup>

## GORDON'S LAST POEM

Tired and worn, and wearisome for love  
Of some immortal hope beyond the grave,  
Thy soul thou frettest like the prisoned dove  
That now is sick to rest, and now doth crave  
To cleave the upward sky with sudden wing !  
The heaven is clear and boundless, and thy  
flight  
To some new land might be a joyous thing.  
Within this cage of clay there is no light ;  
Glimpses between its mortal bars there be  
That bring a powerful longing to be free,  
And tones that reach the ear mysteriously  
When thou art wrapt in thy divinest dream.  
Yet thou art but the plaything and the slave  
Of some strange power that wears thy strength  
away—  
Slowly and surely, which thou dar'st not brave  
Because pale men in some tradition say  
It is a God that would not have thee 'scape  
The torture that He wills to be thy fate.  
'Tis but a tyrant's dream, and born of hate ;  
Then, soul, be not disquieted with doubt ;  
Step to the brink—this hand shall let thee out.

---

<sup>1</sup> 'This poem has a special interest for two reasons. In the first place it has, so far as we are able to discover, never been published, and in the second it is one of the last the dead poet penned. It was, in fact, written only a fortnight prior to his melancholy death. We are enabled to publish it through the kindness of Mr. W. D. Armstrong, M.L.A., who received it from the daughter of Mrs M'Gillivray, one of Gordon's best and oldest friends.'—*Ed. Queenslander.*

*Bush Songs attributed to Gordon*<sup>1</sup>

## THE STOCKMAN'S LAST BED

WHETHER stockman or not,  
For a moment give ear—  
Poor Jack he is dead,  
And no more shall we hear  
The crack of his whip,  
Or his steed's lively trot,  
His clear 'Go ahead,'  
Or his jingling quart pot.  
For he sleeps where the wattles  
Their sweet fragrance shed,  
And tall gum-trees shadow  
The stockman's last bed!

One day, while out yarding,  
He was gored by a steer.  
'Alas!' cried poor Jack,  
'Tis all up with me here;  
And never shall I  
The saddle regain,

---

<sup>1</sup> There are three songs very much sung in the bush which are generally, but I think without reason, attributed to Gordon. They are 'The Stockman's Last Bed,' 'The Bushman's Lullaby' and 'Careless Jim.' Copies of them were procured for me by the kindness of the Hon. Mrs. W. E. Cavendish, daughter of Sir Thomas Bayley, Bart, a squatter then living in Melbourne, for publication in my anthology, *A Century of Australian Song*. I have been told that 'The Stockman's Last Bed' was written by the beautiful Miss Hunter who afterwards became Mrs. Charles Rome, but I think there is better ground for supposing that it was written by her sister-in-law, Mrs James Hunter. Mr. C. D. Mackellar, who stayed at Kalangadoo station when it belonged to the Hunters, believes that Gordon wrote it himself and gave it to one of the Hunters.



Or bound like a wallaby  
Over the plain.'  
So they 've laid him where wattles  
Their sweet fragrance shed, etc.

His whip at his side,  
His dogs they all mourn,  
His horse stands awaiting  
His master's return ;  
While he lies neglected,—  
Unheeded he dies ;  
Save Australia's dark children,  
None knows where he lies.  
For he sleeps, etc.

Then stockman, if ever,  
On some future day,  
While following a mob,  
You should happen to stray—  
Oh, pause by the spot  
Where poor Jack's bones are laid,  
Far, far from the home  
Where in childhood he strayed.  
And tread softly where wattles  
Their sweet fragrance shed,  
And tall gum-trees shadow  
The stockman's last bed.

### THE BUSHMAN'S LULLABY<sup>1</sup>

LIFT me down to the creek-bank, Jack ;  
It must be cooler outside :  
The long hot day is well-nigh done,  
It 's a chance if I see another one.  
I should like to look on the setting sun,  
And the waters cool and wide.

We didn't think it would be like this  
Last week as we rode together ;

---

<sup>1</sup> Attributed also to Henry Kingsley.

True mates we 've been in this far land  
For many a day, since Devon's strand  
We left for these wastes of sun-scorched land  
In the blessed English weather.

We left when the leafy lanes were green,  
And the trees met overhead ;  
The merry brooks ran clear and gay ;  
The air was sweet with the scent of hay ;  
How well I remember the very day,  
And the words my mother said !

We have striven and toiled and fought it out  
Under the hard blue sky,  
Where the plains glowed red in tremulous light,  
Where the haunting mirage mocked the sight  
Of desperate men from morn till night,  
And the streams had long been dry.

Where we dug for gold on the mountain side,  
Where the ice-fed river ran,  
Through frost and blast, through fire and snow,  
Where an Englishman could live and go,  
We 've followed our luck for weal or woe,  
And never asked help from man.

And now it 's over, it 's hard to die,  
Ere the summer of life is o'er,  
Ere time has printed one single mark,  
When the pulse beats high, and the limbs are stark.  
And, O God, to see home no more !

No more ! No more ! Ah ! vain the vow,  
That, whether rich or poor,  
Whatever the years might bring or change,  
I would one day stand by the grey old grange,  
While the children gathered, all shy and strange.  
As I entered the well-known door.

You will go home to the old place, Jack ;  
Tell my mother from me

That I thought of the words she used to say,  
Her looks, her tone, as I dying lay ;  
That I prayed to God as I used to pray  
When I knelt beside her knee.

By the lonely water they made their couch,  
And the southern night fast fled ;  
They heard the wild-fowl splash and cry,  
They heard the mourning reeds' low sigh.  
Such was the Bushman's lullaby ;  
With the dawn his soul was sped.

## CARELESS JIM

His other name ? Well, there I'm stumped ;

He was tall, sir, dark and slim,  
And we—that is, my mates and I—  
Just called him ' Careless Jim.'

That was all we knew—to his other name

No thought we ever gave,  
Until one day, at the foot of the mount,  
When we laid him in his grave.

There were four of us all young and wild,  
You know what the times were then—  
But you see that gap in the mountain, miss—

That gap in the Ferntree Glen—  
'Twas there we lived in a hut so rude,  
But you know what the huts were then !  
That house there 's mine, but I 've often wished  
For those times in the Ferntree Glen.

We had no care—a quarrel at times  
Might the light of our lives bedim,  
But a jump between and ' Don't be fools,'  
Would come from Careless Jim.  
So our lives sped on unruffled, unchanged,  
Till a day all dreary, when  
A shadow fell on the rude old hut  
That we built in the Ferntree Glen.

It was<sup>3</sup> night, and beside a rough bush bed  
We stood with our eyes all dim,  
Watching the flickering lamp of life  
In the face of Careless Jim.  
How bright at times it seemed to burn,  
And then how faint its glow !  
But 'twas sinking fast, and we heard a voice  
Cry, ' Good-bye, boys—I go.'

We dug a grave where the brook babbles on,  
Beneath the fern-tree's shade,  
And between two sheets of the white gum bark  
The form of Jim we laid ;  
Then with spade in hand all mute we stood,  
Chained as it were by a spell,  
Waiting each for the other to heap the clay  
On the clay we loved so well.

'Twas done at length—yet I scarce know how,  
For not a word was said ;  
And a creeper we set at the foot of that grave,  
And a box-tree at his head.  
And we carved his name on a blue gum near,  
Leastways all we knew,  
In a rough irregular sort of way—  
' Jim, 1852.'

Ten years ago I saw that grave ;  
The brook babbled on as before ;  
But the box-tree had pushed the fern aside,  
And the creeper was there no more ;  
But I alone, sir, know that spot  
(For my mates are sleeping too),  
And I carved once more on the blue gum-tree,  
' Jim, 1852.'